NOW & THEN

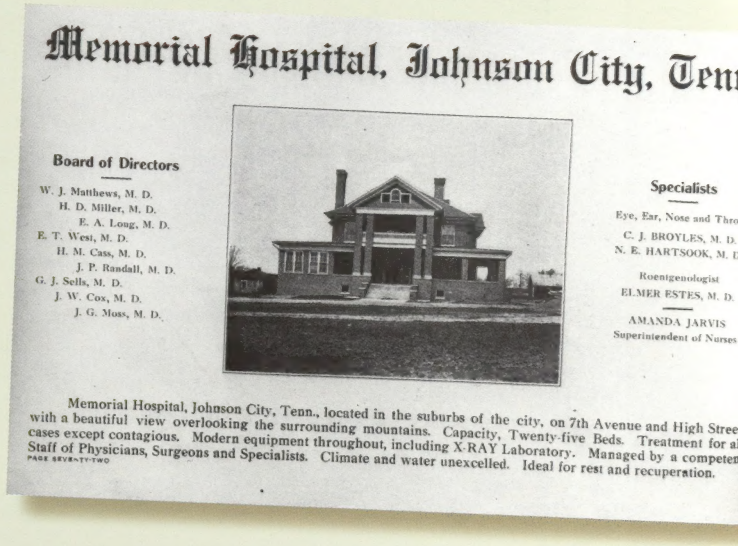
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

The Greening of Appalachia

Now & Then

This year marks the 100th anniversary of East Tennessee State University as well as Johnson City, Tennessee's first public hospital, the twenty-five bed Memorial Hospital (right). Now known as Johnson City Medical Center, the current 488-bed hospital is part of Mountain States Health Alliance.



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PAGE SEVENTY-TWO

MSHA's latest addition to the Tri-Cities medical community is Franklin Woods Community Hospital (above), a Silver LEED-certified facility. LEED, an acronym for "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design," is an internationally recognized green building certification system. Opened in July 2010, FWCH is the first hospital in the region to earn the highly coveted recognition for sustainable construction and operations. The hospital has eighty licensed beds, twenty of which are dedicated as part of Women's and Children's Services, and a twenty-two-room Emergency Department.

Color photo above courtesy Mountain States Health Alliance.
Archival advertisement card above courtesy Archives of Appalachia at ETSU.

On the cover: *Paper Bag #4*, Travis Graves. Photo courtesy the artist.

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By February 29, 2012

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THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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GOLD IS NOT ALL

Roberta Herrin
Director, Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

The first sign of spring is not green but a hint of gold in the valleys. Willow trees along the creeks turn copper, then gold. The young, straight poplars stand like artists' brushes, their golden tips pointing skyward. Too soon, this early gold yields to green and retreats up the mountainsides, a wave of color and new life, washing up against rock and soil, finally crowning the trees with hearty, full leaves.

Robert Frost captures this phenomenon in eight couplets that begin, "Nature's first green is gold, / Her hardest hue to hold." For Frost, the conversion of gold into green is a reversed sort of alchemy; every spring brings the sad news that brevity reigns, that all things, including perfection and life itself, are mutable: "So Eden sank to grief, / So dawn goes down to day. / Nothing gold can stay."

Frost's poem appeared in the collection *New Hampshire*, which won the 1924 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, so I hesitate to argue with such a venerated writer, but I have to say that gold is not all. Green is also good. The solid, dark green of zucchini and string beans is reliable. Gold can be fickle. After all, the promise of "gold" lured the extractive industries to Appalachia—timbering, mining, and, now, drilling—and robbed the mountains and the people of their green. Perhaps the proper way to read Frost's poem is to take the "gold" out of it entirely. Even in his couplets, gold resorts to trickery and diverts us from the real truth: "Nothing... can stay." Everything dies.

Unfortunately, emphasis on death can breed a strain of fatalism that erodes conscience and good sense, especially where ecology and the environment are concerned. What does one more plastic bottle in one more landfill matter? What does one more timber contract matter? What does one more blown-up mountain matter? If death is all, nothing matters.

The current emphasis on "greening" suggests otherwise: Everything matters. The only way to cheat death is to live thoughtfully in the moment and to cherish the first gold of willows and poplars as well as the full green of summer without anticipating the autumn reds and browns that will soon follow. Tender green shoots of polk root or the bitter leaves of branch lettuce are pure gold on the tongue because they are short-lived and can be had only in a brief season.

Spring greening invites us to live so respectfully in the now that all things are venerated and honored and protected. Greening requires us to witness every moment and every season in its fullness—the gold and the green and the autumn red and the winter grey. Pining for any one ephemeral stage, especially that early Eden, leads to eternal destruction. Let us cease to pine for gold alone and commit ourselves to the "greening" of the earth and of our consciences. ❖

Spring retreating up the mountainside. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Fred Sauceman

The first time I remember seeing the word *green* transformed into a gerund was, fittingly, at Greeneville Middle School in Tennessee. A paperback book protruded from the back pocket of a blue-jean-bedecked student teacher in my ninth-grade biology class. Its title: *The Greening of America*. Its author: Yale University professor Charles A. Reich. Although I had never read it, I sensed the book's revolutionary nature, purely from what I knew about the person who had carried it into our classroom. She was a counterculture import from New Jersey. She sat beside us at lab tables as we dissected frogs and crayfish. She told us to call her Ellen. She wore linen and denim and sandals. Tusculum College in my hometown recruited heavily in New Jersey, bringing an influx of radical ideology to the city's public schools as college students fulfilled practice teaching assignments and dressed and thought differently from any instructors my classmates and I had ever encountered. Ellen was 1960s underground embodied. If she stood for "greening," whatever that meant, I could, too.

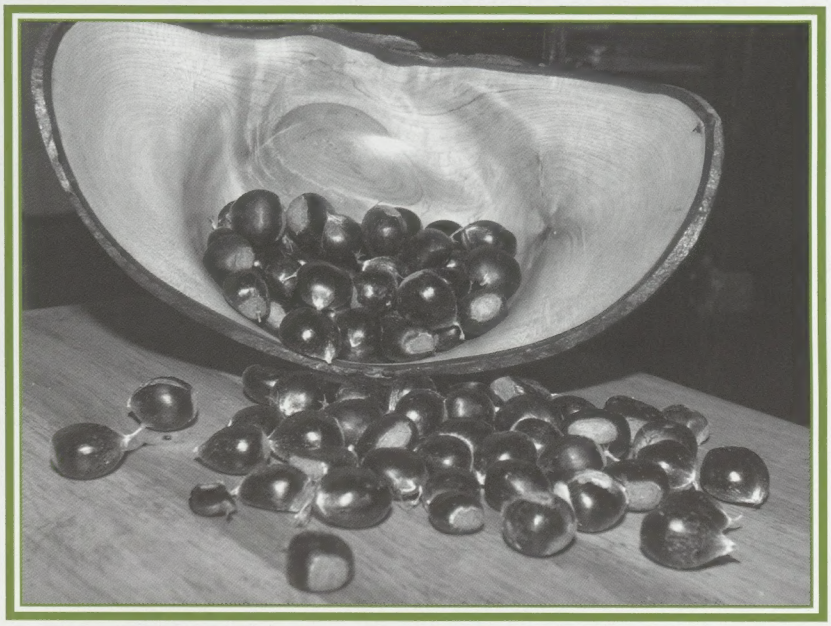
Green, in all its forms, is one of the English language's most pliable words. It can describe envy, rebirth, nausea, and inexperience. It conforms to our notion of malleable theme words here at *Now & Then*. In this issue, we ponder green tea, green buildings, green beans, and green bottles. Add the "-ing" and you get an increasingly mainstreamed cousin of the idea Ellen was advertising in her frayed back pocket in 1970: a new consciousness and, these days, an urgent compulsion to halt the deterioration of the planet.

Come to think of it, Ellen came into our science classroom only a few weeks before the very first Earth Day.

Now, *greening*—be its meaning political or environmental—has become common parlance not only among back-to-the-landers and twenty-first-century incarnations of people like Ellen but in corporate boardrooms, too. What was once revolutionary is now routine. And as several writers point out in this issue, what is now embraced across the country as trendy and progressive has really been going on in Appalachia for a long, long time.❖

New Hope for the American Chestnut

Michael Joslin



High winds brought the last of the year's chestnuts down from the pair of Chinese chestnut trees behind my North Carolina house, and we gathered the nuts as they and their spiky cases fell from the branches. For the next several months we roasted and boiled the nutritious nuts, enjoying a taste of Appalachian heritage, China style.

How a tree from the opposite side of the globe has, at least temporarily, taken the place of the climax tree of the Appalachian forest is a sad story that may yet have a happy ending.

In 1904 the forester of Bronx Park in New York City noticed that his American chestnuts were dying. By 1950, virtually the entire stand of American chestnuts in the East had been destroyed by the chestnut blight caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, unwittingly imported from China.

In the Southern Appalachians where the chestnut had reigned supreme for millions of years, the blight threw its shadow across an entire way of life.

The loss of the American chestnut has been an environmental disaster that we, and our parents and grandparents, have all learned to live with. The Appalachian forest today is far different from that of a century ago when the chestnut was the dominant species of the climax forest and the primary forest support for people as well as animals.

Chestnut lumber was used from the cradle to the coffin. The tall, straight wood provided telephone and telegraph poles as well as railroad ties, linking the frail human species across wide areas. People built their houses, fences, and barns from chestnut. Hearths glowed with fires built from the hot-burning wood. Tanneries obtained their tannin from chestnut extract factories.

The fruit of the chestnut fattened folks, who gathered the nuts by the bushel to store for the hard winter months. Livestock, left to roam in the forest, ate them, too.

A few years ago I visited my friend Joe Willis in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, to get his advice on how best to prepare chestnuts. At ninety-four, he remembered the harvest early in the twentieth century and the comfort of eating boiled and roasted chestnuts

Chestnuts spill from Joe Willis's bowl. Photo courtesy Michael Joslin.

in front of the stove on a cold winter's night. When I dumped several chestnuts on his kitchen table, he looked them over quickly and said, "They're not our kind. Our kind's gone."

With his wood-burning cook stove warming the room on this chilly Sunday morning, he picked up a nut to look it over, explaining that these Chinese chestnuts were somewhat larger than the native American nuts. When I asked him how he used to prepare them, he put his hand in his pocket, pulled out his Case pocketknife, opened the blade, and carefully cut away the light-colored cap of the nut.

"When I lived at Aunt Jenny's up in the watershed when I was around six or so, I'd go gather chestnuts off in the woods behind the barn," said Joe, picking up another nut to cut. "If the dogs would go with me, I wouldn't be afraid. I'd take a 25-pound feed sack. If the wind had blowed and nothing hadn't gotten to them, I would fill that bag with chestnuts."

Because everything from tiny chipmunks to huge black bears craved the nuts, Joe had competition. He had to get to the tree early for the best ones. One cold morning, the simple chore brought more excitement than he expected. The wind had blown all night, and his Aunt Jenny sent him out to gather nuts. But hogs had already cleaned them up, from the chestnut trees that stood close to the house.

"Them trees is the first place the hogs made for in the morning," said Joe, removing the cap of another nut. "I went up to the big tree in the woods."

As the small boy filled his bag, the dogs' behavior gave him an uneasy feeling.

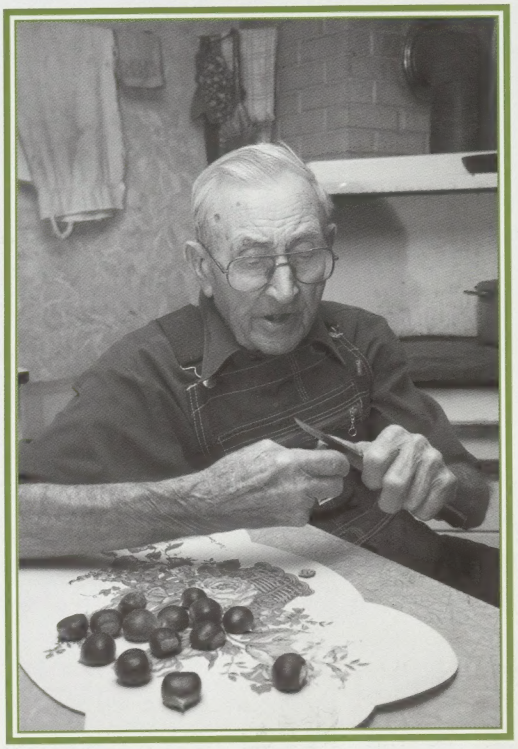
"I was up there, and the dogs started growling and putting their hair up. I looked around, and it was an old bear. The dogs was staying close to me protecting me. I found where he'd been eating chestnuts and spitting the hulls out. He was waiting for me to go so he could eat more."

He got back to Aunt Jenny's with chestnuts and a story to tell around the stove.

"That was something you snacked on just like people eat popcorn now," he said. "Sometimes we'd boil them. We'd cut the bottom out of them or cut a hole, put them in a pot of water, and boil them to get them soft. Aunt Jenny would cook a gallon at a time.

"Or you could bake them. Put them in a bake pan or frying pan and cook them in the oven. If you didn't cut the bottom off of them, they'd explode all over the oven. When you baked them, they'd stay hard; when you boiled them, they'd get soft."

Humans and their domestic animals were not the only benefactors of the chestnut. Woodland wildlife also depended on the annual bounty that literally fell



from above. Mammals large and small feasted on the nuts. White-tailed deer, gray squirrels, and the predators that fed upon them depended on chestnuts. Grouse and turkey gathered beneath the large trees to feed.

The importance of the chestnut stand in the Appalachians in the early twentieth century cannot be exaggerated. According to forester P. L. Buttrick, whose 1913 essay "Chestnut in North Carolina" analyzed the state of the forest as the deadly chestnut blight approached, the chestnut made up 37 percent of the total timber stand in Mitchell County and averaged 27 percent across all of Western North Carolina.

In the 1925 pamphlet "Chestnut and the Chestnut Blight in North Carolina," state forester J. S. Holmes wrote: "The disappearance of this tree from the forests of the western part of the State, which, according to those best qualified to judge, is a foregone conclusion, is not only a State but a National calamity."

Joe Willis prepares chestnuts. Photo courtesy Michael Joslin.

He was right. Today virtually no mature native chestnuts thrive in the Appalachians. But that is not the end of the story.

For almost a century foresters have tried to repair the rent in the fabric of our forests caused by the chestnut blight. Today a coalition of volunteers, government employees, educators, and the American Chestnut Foundation strives to bring the stately chestnut back to its place as the dominant tree of the Eastern forest.

For decades, government foresters and plant pathologists have tried to breed genetically-resistant trees by crossing the American chestnut with the Chinese variety. Today, building on these efforts and using advances in genetic engineering, experts think the chances of creating successful hybrids are excellent. Using back-cross breeding, scientists have created blight-resistant seedlings that are 94 percent American chestnut and 6 percent Chinese.

"They cross the Chinese with the American," says Ron Myers, staff forester with the North Carolina Forest Service. "Then they backcross to the American; then they backcross to the American again. When you backcross the third time, you get a tree that is fifteen-sixteenths American."

The Chinese chestnut is a low-growing tree with branches that spread like a fruit tree. It has resistance to the blight that comes from its homeland. The American chestnut, with its lofty stature, rapid growth, and wide variety of uses, has an Achilles heel: susceptibility to blight. By bringing the genetic protection against the blight from the Chinese to the American while retaining our native tree's favorable characteristics, the American Chestnut Foundation, the University of Tennessee, and the U.S. Forest Service hope to restore the natural wealth of the chestnut to our forests.

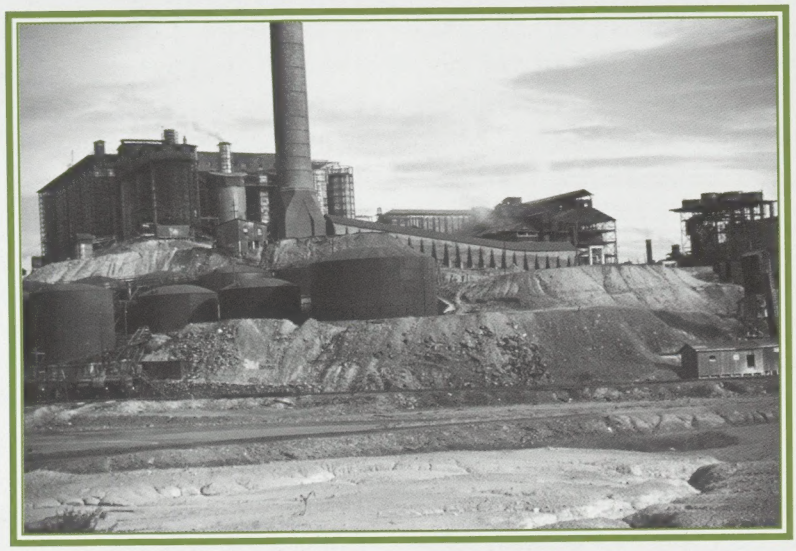
Researchers monitor test plots in North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee containing hundreds of the blight-resistant hybrids, which "are exceeding expectations," according to the Forest Service.

While none of us will see giant chestnuts with diameters our arms cannot encircle, perhaps our children's grandchildren will enjoy the majestic sight and the bountiful fruit of a tree that once ruled our forests and nurtured generations of Appalachian denizens. What better can we bequeath to our progeny than healthy chestnuts in a healthy forest on a healthy planet. ❖

Michael Joslin lives with his wife Pam on a farm in the Buladean community of Mitchell County, North Carolina. He is a professor at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

The Voice of the Turtle Returns, Sweet and Clear

Dot Jackson



Once upon a time, not so long ago, in a valley of the Southern Appalachian chain, the land was as silent as death. Spring brought no piping chant of peep-frogs, no hum of bees. No Chuck-Will's-Widow drifted on the summer winds, no night-bugs chirred, no enraptured mockingbird sang to the moon.

Even the ripples of the branch were muted, clogged as they were by a century of silt. No willow roots confined the listless, blackened waters, no gum and sycamore offered limbs of shady respite for the birds. No bird was stopping over, anyway. No bugs, no berries, no eats, no shelter. No life.

As it happened with King Midas, who used a magic wish to turn anything he touched into gold, the power that brought such prosperity also brought disaster.

After the 1843 discovery of copper, in a lushly forested and lived-in corner of southeastern Tennessee, at the Georgia and North Carolina state lines, the mining and smelting that followed certainly brought in money, at the expense of just about everything else.

Huge fires that roasted the early ore and separated out the copper, and then the smelter furnaces that "modernized" the job, first ran on wood because there was no easy way to bring in coal. There went the old, native forests, even down to the grubbed-up stumps. Left were the naked red hills, bleeding all their topsoil into the streams. Regrowth was impossible.

By the early 1900s, farmers across the Ocoee River in McCaysville, Georgia, went to the courts for help, in their fury, when, downwind of the sulfuric-acid-belching smelters of neighboring Copperhill, Tennessee, they found not just their farm crops ruined but their woods and pastures brown and dying and fish belly-up in the streams.

Still, there was money to be made. The foggy, sulfurous vapors kept on rising from the smelter chimneys, spewing death over some 50 square miles of the Copper Basin.

When the Tennessee Valley Authority arrived, in the 1930s, to build three dams on the Ocoee River, the scene was like the earth was suffering a monster case of

Copperhill smelting plant, 1937. Library of Congress, Print and Photographs Division, photo by Marion Post Wolcott.

mange. As far as anyone could see, hill after hill, mile after mile, rolled that bare, blighted, gully-wrinkled hide, without a tree or a sprig of grass.

The TVA set up a Civilian Conservation Corps camp there, to try to rehabilitate the land. The young men planted seedlings and sowed grass. Nothing took. Even kudzu cringed and put down not a root. Rain full of sulfuric acid scorched every leaf that tried to grow.

"All my life I've been told about Hell—a burned-up place with black water pouring down the hills. But I never expected to see it in this life."

But the mines and smelting plants needed workers. People stayed in the towns of Copperhill, Ducktown, and Isabella. It was their land, deformed though it might be, and many would not leave it, any more than they would have left enfeebled parents. Loyalty was a strong commodity. And most could not remember it any other way.

When my daddy came in to work on TVA's Ocoee dams, in 1941, he brought his family. There we were, jammed into that 1934 Ford, coming from another dam, way across the mountains, with all our necessities in trunks tied on the running boards. I was eight. The land was a mesmerizing sight.

We rode through the towns, noting that there was indeed a drugstore and an A&P, banks, schools, and filling stations. There were kids on the sidewalk, eating ice cream cones. The atmosphere was downright yellow—a strange, pallid translucency that cast an odd light on the faces, highlighting the bones. Local people did not seem alarmed at all.

Out on the old Copper Road, cut high above the river, Daddy pulled the car onto a wide place, to take in the scene. Aunt Bird, ancient and thin beneath her tiny birdsnest hat, was plain undone. "They Lord have mercy!" she said. "All my life I've been told about Hell—a burned-up place with black water pouring down the hills. But I never expected to see it in this life."

No one on that journey was keen on living in it. We went on down the river, into some surviving woods where the TVA had built employee housing on the far bank, with a long footbridge for access. My mother had heard on the radio a night or two before about an old wild sow attacking folks and carrying off a child. Somehow that connected in her mind with the community she was seeing.

"Not this place!" she said. "I do not want my children being eaten."

All there was to do was turn around and see what lay beyond Ducktown, on the North Carolina side.

Franklin Mountain, on the border, loomed ahead. At the top, the view was nearly as amazing, toward the other side. It was, to me, the most beautiful, the greenest, the most welcoming country ever in my life. After a couple of stops down where the trees grew tall and the streams were swift and clear, we came to the right dirt road, in Hothouse Township, and the right farmhouse—green pastures and the happiest-ever home for a child.

Anything we wanted, nearly, was up on the highway, just across the creek, at John McAllister's General Mdse. Our mail came there. Dislike of The Government prevented people from having mailboxes at home, so Mr. Kisselberg, the mailman, brought it all to the store, where the McAllisters doled it out.

On that daily errand, we loaded up on bottled Yoo Hoo chocolate, banana flips, and tobacco. Good sturdy shoes were a dollar a pair and dress goods mighty reasonable. If we needed something that was not there, we got a tank of Esso and headed back over Franklin Mountain to Ducktown or on four more miles or so to the metropolis of Copperhill.

Among the city amenities was the office of Dr. Geisler, a fine elderly gentleman who was the health care for employees of the Tennessee Copper Company. When the older boy in our family took pneumonia, Dr. Geisler came the dozen miles to us at Hothouse. He had the new Sulfa miracle drugs in his satchel and came every day for over a week to see the boy, until the crisis passed. My daddy marveled at his bill: $13.

Once when we needed him we couldn't get him. I had fallen sidewise on the red-hot schoolhouse stove and fried a skinny arm from fingertips to shoulder. There were no phones. When we got to Copperhill, the doctor had gone far afield to bring a baby.

We went over to the drugstore, where the druggist looked at the mess, squeezed a tube of something on it, bound it up like a mummy, and told my mother, "Don't unwrap it for six weeks, no matter

how dirty it gets." She didn't, and at the appointed unveiling, the healing was mottled perfection.

World War II began that winter. Some of the men were drawn away to construct new military bases. My daddy was sent to Homestead, Florida, to build a home for Navy blimps. And thus we left what had become the homeplace of the heart. Now seventy years later, I still have some little lamps and other gimcracks bought in Copperhill.

Sometimes money—or the ups and downs thereof—can do wondrous things.

When the astronauts ventured into space in the late 1960s, they saw just three manmade scars or outcrops on the Earth: the Great Wall of China, the pyramids of Egypt, and the denuded Copper Basin of eastern Tennessee. A little later, a biological study found only one form of animal life, an insect, surviving in the basin's waters.

The three rich veins of copper ore beneath the basin had not played out, but by the 1980s, they were too expensive to mine. Copper could be imported more cheaply from abroad. And so the age of local copper ended.

The last mining operation closed in 1987. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency took note of the ruins in 1991. When Atlanta hosted the Olympics in 1996, the improved Ocoee River was the site of the whitewater competition. Cleanup work continued through the next decade. Seedlings planted in remedied soil took root and thrived.

When the astronauts ventured into space in the late 1960s, they saw just three manmade scars or outcrops on the Earth: the Great Wall of China, the pyramids of Egypt, and the denuded Copper Basin of eastern Tennessee.

We may not yet find great oaks shading the streets of Copperhill. We may not yet hear the wind in massive, aged pines. But we will see green. The land is green enough that tourism has supplanted copper as the major industry of the basin. The Ocoee sparkles, its rapids alive with kayaks and canoes. Hikers camp in newborn wilderness.

The woodthrush calls at the close of day, and the cooing voice of the turtledove is back upon the land. ❖

Dot Jackson worked for newspapers for over forty years and is now at home in the mountains of South Carolina. She is the author of the novel *Refuge*.

Fishing Expedition

Barbara Smith

Saturday hot at four o'clock,
The sun bejewels the lake.
Clouds tease the sky
And waves sneak up
To lick the lush green shrubs.
A slick white boat kicks
Out of the no-wake zone,
A couple of old men
On a jet ski rooster-tailing behind.
Both motors insist upon escape.

The breeze whispers through my hair.
A crow demands attention.
Cars pass reluctant on the shoreline road,
And, around the curve of green-blue water
Three life-jacketed kids whoop it up
As their father loses his balance
On the hip of their anchored speed boat
Then rises to the swim.

Our two poles, their lines limp as an afterthought,
Spread peace and blessings as they shoo away fish.

Barbara Smith is professor emerita of literature and writing and former chair of the Division of Humanities at Alderson-Broaddus College in Philippi, West Virginia.

The Spring

Richard Hague

It was a tiny seep arising beneath twin trunks of a shagbark hickory far over the hill in the woods, right on the property line. I would never have known it was there if my father hadn't very deliberately walked me down to it when I was a boy. I helped him clear the hickory and oak leaves from it, and he told to me to look around, get my bearings.

I didn't visit it for many years after that until one day my brother and I wound up there, both of us in flannel shirts, me carrying a spud bar, he a shovel. The spring was nearly overgrown with poison ivy, so Dennis and I worked gingerly, clearing it, digging a few rocks out of its bottom to make it deeper, then going on to whatever else it was we did that vanished day.

That hour of work at the spring is really the only physical job I remember sharing with my brother. I have nine years on him, and when as a teenager I was doing heavy chores around the house or in the yard, he was too small to help. This was certainly the only labor we'd done together in the woods, which has never been on my brother's list of favorite places. The beds in the trailer are uncomfortable, the night business of mice and blacksnakes unnerving, and the call of the whippoorwills, starting just at dusk, maddening to all but the most seasoned of country people.

A couple more years passed, and I revisited the spring another day, this time alone. The woods were growing so, and my memory eroding so steadily, that I'd had to wander around for fifteen minutes before I spied the twin shagbark trunks and then, approaching, caught a glimmer of sky down there in the forest duff. The spring's glassy reflection and its stillness created the impression of a small hole opened through the earth. I was looking down, clear through to the sky on the other side of the world. I paused a moment, letting the strangeness of that perception dwell in me.

I stepped forward then, and the reflection on the spring's surface grew mottled with overhanging leaves and the bark of the hickories. Then my own face loomed as I peered downward. There, just beneath

Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

my right eye, a small crawfish, its carapace glinting with tiny vivid green and red spikes, crawled slowly backwards toward my ear.

We do not inhabit this planet with anything approaching full attention. Almost all of life goes on without us, without our even seeing or hearing or feeling it, without knowledge of most of its existence even secondhand, through books, poems, talk. The spring that my brother and I had cleared for whatever uncertain purpose—to make it easier to find, to secure a back-up source of water in case the electric pump in the well were to fail, or simply to manufacture a few moments of brotherly bonding—this spring had become a place for crawfish to breed, a place of generation and predation, and a continual, almost wholly unremarked reflection of the heavens.

If a hole fills with clear sweet water in the woods—and if it is inhabited by intricately jointed and delicately bejeweled animals—and if it holds within its mirrory stillness the sunned and moony heavens—and if there is no one present to notice it—is it still beautiful, strange, and important?

Where are my brother and I in its history, we whose kind claim and accept stewardship, yet practice a rampant dominion over the earth? To this spring, what can our transient presence, and our intermittent, evaporating labor, ever mean? Here is this place, and here it will be, its glassy clarity, its hand-deep beauty, its silent gathering of itself on the hillside, more permanent and real than any university or steel mill or philosophy. Quickly it will shed any sign of our work; geology and climate will regain the upper hand and change and shape it how they will. And my brother and I—here we were, only once, and so briefly, so imperceptibly, that in the long exposure of time's photograph, we aren't even blurs. ❖

Richard Hague's collection of short stories and tales, *Fivethree Filson and the Looking Business*, is forthcoming from Bottom Dog Press.

A Sixties Summertime Memory of Frog Hunting

Fred Sauceman

I don't hear much talk of frog-hunting any more. Biologists say the frog population is declining worldwide, an ominous sign for the planet and its ecosystems.

And the conditions under which my father and I hunted frogs in the 1960s would be, today, dangerous if not possibly fatal.

Back then, my father thought nothing about showing up in the middle of the night, unannounced, on the banks of someone's farm pond in rural Greene County, Tennessee. The Magnavox Company, where he worked, employed about 6,000 people in the 1960s, and he knew just about all of them. Many of his coworkers lived out in the county, and they had ponds.

My father never felt it necessary to call ahead or even go up to an owner's house, knock on the door, and announce our presence. Yet we were never confronted, accosted, or fired upon. Think of it. Two truck headlights scan the fields, a lit cigarette is traceable from truck to pond, a flashlight draws patterns on the water's surface and, if my attention lapses, on the clouds above. Despite the light show, nobody gets suspicious.

We completed these hunts without interruptions from any anxious landowners, ever.

Grasping a cane pole with a gig attached, my father would tiptoe around the water's edge while I held the flashlight and a cotton sack. That was my assignment: circling strange ponds for hours late at night, blinding amphibians. When my beam of light met two eyes just above the water line, my father, rocking back on one foot like a javelin thrower, would spear the frog with that gig.

Primitive, perhaps. But the alternative was rifle fire: .22-calibre hollow-point bullets. They greatly

Frog-hunting equipment. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

increased your range, certainly. But wading into the cold, dark, snaky water without the luxury of hip boots, to try and retrieve the frog, negated the advantage.

Most every hardware store carried frog gigs in those days. They consisted of four barbed prongs. A good supply of cane poles always stood in the corner of our garage. We made teepee structures out of them for beans to climb in the summertime. And they were my fishing poles. There were no mechanical parts on my childhood fishing gear. No reels. No line entanglement. Not much casting, really. Cane poles were versatile tools at our house.

Toward midnight, when the cotton sack got so heavy and so jumpy with frogs that I could barely carry it, we'd head back home, and my father would clean the frogs in the backyard. The implements were always the same: a block of concrete, a yellow Case pocketknife, a pair of pliers, and a pan of water.

In 2009, for a special foodways issue, the staff at the University of North Carolina's *Southern Cultures* magazine asked me to write a short piece about my favorite food. I contemplated country ham, fried chicken, rice with gravy, oysters, and soup beans.

But as much for the memory as the taste, I settled on fresh frog legs. Freeze them, and the flavor, texture, and color are lost. Fresh out of the pond, they are ethereal.

The morning after those frog hunts, my mother would roll the legs in salted and peppered flour and fry them lightly in a black iron skillet. The cotton-white meat is still my favorite food, the recollection of it made all the more poignant because these trips into the night were cut short too early by my father's untimely death in the winter of 1973.

I haven't frog-hunted since. ❖

Fred Sauceman is the editor of *Now & Then*.

A Bobcat Crossing the Strip-mine

Matthew Haughton

Stepping out of weeds, he slips across
the carved landscape—
another castaway soul pouring off
the battlefield. Scavenging the open
in silent steps, his sharp teeth
catch the headlights, like stars drifting
too close over the bone-licked earth.

Creek Water

After the painting: Light's Course *by Robert James Foose*

Matthew Haughton

Up in Madison County,
there's a path
of light in the woods.
Ripening, the light sings
like brass
off the skirt of a bell—
passing holes
on a leaf,
chewed by beetles.
The light spills on bark,
sinks in grass.
From the grass,
the light
crosses creek water,
where it shivers
in its creation,
shifting over bed stones.

Matthew Haughton, son of an eastern Kentucky family, grew up in Greenup County and graduated from the University of Kentucky. He is the author of the chapbook *Bee-coursing Box* (Accents Publishing). He lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

How Green Are Our Mountains?

Margaret M. Nava

Flash back to the sixties. The war in Vietnam is in full swing. John F. Kennedy is elected President in 1960 but is assassinated in 1963. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 and is gunned down five years later. The British Invasion begins when the Beatles appear on "The Ed Sullivan Show" in 1964. Man sets foot on the moon in 1969. And thousands of longhaired, barefoot youths dressed in tie-dye and love beads are jumping into brightly painted microbuses and escaping their middle-class homes in search of peace, love, and a utopian way of life.

Almost overnight small settlements, or communes, consisting of tents, shacks, and lean-tos built of twigs and mud began popping up in rural areas. In his book *Shared Visions, Shared Lives*, Bill Metcalf defined communes as an idealized form of family having a common purse, a collective household, making decisions as a group, sharing everyday life and facilities, practicing non-violence, and experiencing emotions that go beyond social collectivity. In reality, they were the means by which egalitarian protesters defied a culture they believed was corrupt, unjust, and outdated.

Although communes date back to the Ancient Greeks, what became known as the "Hippie Movement" in the United States seems to have gotten its start in California in the late 1950s. Based on economic and ecologic sustainability, life in the communes was, for the most part, uncomplicated. No one owned anything – everything was shared. Mother Nature was respected, not exploited. Whatever couldn't be grown or made by hand probably wasn't needed. Everything was reused or recycled. There were dancing, handholding, meditation, folk music, and harmony. But as early settlements grew too large or too bureaucratic, many "Hippies" (a term coined by a San Francisco journalist) packed up their meager belongings and headed east toward the hills and forests of Appalachia.

One of the first communes, not far outside the Appalachian region, was the Twin Oaks Community

Twin Oaks greenhouse, Louisa, Virginia. Photo courtesy Twin Oaks.

in Louisa, Virginia, established in 1967 and patterned after behaviorist principles presented in B.F. Skinner's book *Walden Two*. According to a one-time member, this community "sought to liberate the world from wage slavery and consumerism and give the good life to everyone who was willing to work their quota of labor credits." While the concept held merit, putting it into action turned out to be a whole different matter. From the very beginning, there were financial difficulties, dissension among the residents, and rampant disillusionment. Planning was practically non-existent, the government bordered on communism, and living and working conditions left a lot to be desired. Most people who joined ended up leaving after a very short time. For the first year, the average stay was three months. If it had not been for those laid-back, spontaneous, idealistic hippie refugees from California, the fledgling community might have been doomed.

Situated a relatively short distance from both the Appalachian Trail and Shenandoah National Park, Twin Oaks was a wilderness oasis that embodied everything the hippies valued: rich soils for growing fruits and vegetables; abundant streams and rivers to water the crops; herbs, mushrooms, and wildflowers free for the picking; a clean environment in which to raise children; and enough room to spread out and run around naked without interference from the outside world. Although the ideology of the hippies and Twin Oaks founders differed, there were enough similarities to unite the two groups. Working together, they modified the community's original structure and created several community-owned businesses. They made hammocks, grew heritage seeds, and cultivated organic products and meat alternatives. Profits were shared among the members.

Around the same time Twin Oaks was getting its start, some 320 marijuana-smoking hippies led by a man named Stephen Gaskin were heading out from San Francisco in search of a place to call their own. When they reached Summertown, Tennessee, they knew they'd found it. Making a down payment on an abandoned 1000-acre cattle farm, they parked their buses and vans, pitched tents, learned how to farm, and developed a vegetarian diet based on soy protein that became a model for planetary food sustainability. Calling their new home "The Farm," people who lived here considered the earth sacred, relied on kerosene and outhouses, and used no alcohol, tobacco, or artificial birth control. Following a devastating tornado in 1974, Farm members provided neighbors with food and blankets and later established schools and orphanages in Bangladesh and Central America as well as in their own backyard.

In 1968, Swami Prabhupada and a small band of Hare Krishna devotees settled on a small rundown farm in Moundsville, West Virginia, in hopes of replicating a sacred temple located in Vrindaban, India, and establishing an American society based on Krishna Consciousness or love of God. There were no electricity, no running water, and the only building, a battered pioneer shack, afforded scant luxury. However, when the Swami had a vision of "seven temples on the seven hills," suddenly all obstacles seemed insignificant to his followers. By 1972, the temple became a reality and the community had expanded from 100 to 500 acres.

Those who joined New Vrindiban (the Land of Krishna) conserved natural resources, followed an agrarian/vegetarian lifestyle, and protected cows. According to their teachings, "the cow is considered the most useful of all domestic beasts. Eating only grass, which costs nothing to produce, cows produce milk that provides nearly all the necessary nutrients, and one cow produces more milk than a whole family can drink in one day. What is not drunk is turned into yogurt, cheese, butter and ghee (clarified butter) – the latter being the basis for so many exquisite Indian sweetmeats and savouries."

By the 1970s, things began to change. Folk music gave way to disco. Three-piece suits replaced tie-dye. Sharing became passé and more (of everything) was better. Although many of the original communes were abandoned, Twin Oaks, The Farm, and New Vrindiban survived and evolved into what are now called Intentional Communities or Ecovillages. And although the tents and mud and twig lean-tos were replaced with Earthships and passive solar homes, and the "hippies" (still wearing sandals and long hair) are now teaching classes on permaculture, hydroponics, and animal husbandry, the original concept of economic and ecologic sustainability remains the same, now with a new name, "Green Living."

Leading the way in Appalachian Green Living is a small group of people who are trying to create a village that is both a living laboratory and educational seed bank for a sustainable human future. Located on 320 acres about 40 minutes southeast of Asheville, North Carolina,

Earthaven Ecovillage is "dedicated to caring for people and the Earth by learning and demonstrating a holistic, sustainable culture." Although founded in 1991, Earthaven is still under construction. Nevertheless, the off-grid power station, natural gardens, community-based businesses, internships, and workshops are indications that this community will be around for many years to come.

In Knoxville, Tennessee, the Foundation for Global Sustainability "works to restore the balance between human activities and the natural life support systems of the Earth" by monitoring and addressing social and environmental issues in the Upper Tennessee Valley and the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Programs include the Green Media Project, providing information not adequately addressed by mainstream media; Change of Atmosphere, educating communities about sustainability through festivals, tours, and events; and the Knoxville Ecovillage Project, still in its organizational infancy, which hopes to build an urban "neighborhood where kids can run and play, where their parents can grow their own food, where there are no cars, no trash or litter and no iron fences . . . just trees, birds, benches and bike paths."

At Berea College in Kentucky, students enrolled in Sustainability and Environmental Studies live in an ecologically-sustainable residential complex designed to meet their housing and childcare needs while providing labor opportunities. The complex includes fifty apartments, a state-of-the-art Child Development Laboratory, a Commons House, and a Sustainability and Environmental Studies demonstration house. The Berea Ecovillage seeks to reduce energy consumption and per capita water use by 75 percent each. Among its other goals are the treatment of sewage and wastewater on-site to swimmable quality and recycling, reusing, or composting at least 50 percent of waste. The Ecovillage incorporates a wide range of green design elements including passive solar heating, photovoltaic panels, and wind-powered electrical generators. On-site treatment of waste is accomplished through the Ecological Machine, which converts sewage to swimmable quality water, and through a composting toilet in the demonstration house. Rooftop capture of rainwater contributes to landscape irrigation and production of fruits and vegetables.

The communes of the sixties may be long gone, but their legacy lives on in the green mountains of Appalachia. ❖

Margaret M. Nava has written five books: two New Mexico travel guides and three "Lady-Lit" novels about life and love in the twilight years.

The Laundromat

Samuel Church

I found God in the laundromat.
Sitting next to the sleeping hat
that covered up the bearded face
of the homeless man who just laced
his jacket tight to his bare chest.

I found God while reading Thoreau.
In the woods, at the pond, I grow
closer to myself and begin
searching the beards of homeless men
holding jackets tight to their chests.

This is where I think I belong.
Finding God my own way. At dawn
I'll walk towards the sun with dreams
about where I'll look, as the seams
hold the jacket tight to my chest.

Samuel Church came to live in East Tennessee eleven years ago by way of Kentucky and Mississippi. His poetry was recently featured in *A! Magazine for the Arts*.

Getting Green at Celo

Janice Willis Barnett

Appalachian and *green* are words that attract stereotypes the way old-fashioned sticky strips catch flies. Stereotypes are sticky business. Most of the Appalachian ones are loaded with dead flies from the past, but what of the elitist stereotypes stuck on the new green folks eating organic and wearing a lot of cotton? Some might say these sticky images are mutually exclusive. They might say that the Celo community in the mountains of western North Carolina is green but not Appalachian. They might be wrong.

Located on a 1,200-acre tract in Yancey County, Celo has been around for three-quarters of a century. Arthur Ernest Morgan, the first chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority and a former president of Antioch College, founded Celo in 1937, with the financial backing of Chicago industrialist Henry Regnery. Morgan hoped to establish a Utopian community based on communal cooperation and sharing as opposed to capitalist competiveness. However, his venture was waning by the time the back-to-the-landers discovered Celo in the 1960s, bringing with them an increase in population and a heightened interest in environmentalism. Today, Celo is a land trust focused on environmentally responsible use and preservation of the community's lands.

I first heard about Celo at an open-mic for women writers held monthly in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. The Celo women wore a lot of cotton and wrote a lot about nature, so I decided that Celo was probably a green community. It wasn't until I talked with Celo poet Anne Maren-Hogan and her husband Sam Maren that I learned just how limited my thinking on being green has been.

Anne and Sam moved to Celo ten years ago when their son entered the Arthur Morgan School. The school has a strong environmental sustainability focus as does the community's health center, food co-op, and Camp Celo. Sam and Anne are garden managers for the camp, which serves seven-to-twelve-year-olds in the summer. Anne grew up in Iowa, Sam in New Jersey. Trained social workers, they were employed for twenty

Sam Maren and Anne Maren-Hogan. Photo courtesy Janice Willis Barnett.

years at a school for troubled teenagers in West Virginia before coming to Celo.

Dressed in her work boots and jeans, Anne was in the garden transplanting larkspur the day I drove across Iron Mountain from my home in Unicoi County, Tennessee, to visit with her and Sam. The larkspur had been growing in the asparagus patch where Anne had the chickens penned up. She was letting them weed the patch before the tender asparagus shoots peeked out. "They'll eat anything green in sight this time of year," she said. "We'll move them to another spot when they finish here."

Sam joined us and explained that this was the Barrus homestead. Gib and Annie Barrus operate Camp Celo. From where we were standing, we could see the camp dining hall, the Baruss' house with its solar panels, and Sam and Anne's brown, rustic-style home. Sam's parents live nearby, and Gib's sister Barbara, who helps operate the camp, lives just across the South Toe River, which borders the property. I noticed how level the surrounding land was in comparison to much of Yancey County. It appeared to stretch for miles before being rimmed in by the Blue Ridge on the east and the Black Mountains on the west.

Sam and Anne rent their home from the Barruses but hope to have their own place in the near future. Celo residents must apply for membership and be accepted by the community's board of directors before being eligible to apply for a holding lease agreement on a piece of land. Sam and Anne are now regular community members, having just passed the required one-year trial membership. They will not own the land they lease but will have the right to sell the lease agreement to another community member.

"It took us awhile to decide this was what was next for us because we kept our place in West Virginia when we first brought our son here," Anne said. "Then we realized there was something really amazing about working together with people on a piece of land, just sharing it."

The Celo community is about stewardship rather than ownership, Sam explained. In keeping with this ethic, the campers help him and Anne with farm chores for an hour every morning. This may involve milking the camp cow or goats, feeding chickens and gathering eggs, or harvesting food from the garden for lunch. These are new experiences for many of the children, who come from urban areas such as New York City or Atlanta. Some are from as far away as Palestine and France.

The garden sits in the middle of the campground so that campers can walk through it on their way to the dining hall. Grass pathways spiral in between rows of vegetables. "We grow everything from asparagus to zucchini," Sam said. The clippings from the grass pathways help keep down weeds in the "A to Z" rows.

"It's like a marriage and you have to work at it. You have to work on keeping your relationship with the land healthy."

Sam and Anne focus on teaching campers how to work with natural processes to sustain the garden. "They get to see how the cow manure is used," Sam said. "They learn how the manure is broken down by the worms, bacteria, and yeasts. It's fascinating. The kids get to see a system, a life cycle that feeds them literally."

The garden measures only three-quarters of an acre. Yet in 2010, Sam and Anne produced enough food to feed the five families on the Barrus homestead, plus over one hundred campers and camp personnel, and still had vegetables to give to local charities. The camp also made $40,000 from produce Sam sold to restaurants.

"I wanted to see if the land could produce that much food and make a profit if we had to," Sam said. "And we've seen the soil improve and improve and improve as we've produced more. We're not mining our soil. We don't plant all the space. We give our soil a rest. We cover-crop and rotate crops. We listen to the needs of the ground by soil testing and adding manure and lime to adjust the pH. Our soil is full of microorganisms because we don't use any harsh chemicals that would kill them. It's these microorganisms that break down the compost and manure into soluble elements that plants need to take nutrients into their roots.

"If we aren't greedy, and we give more than we take, then we are well taken care of," Sam added. "We don't have a paradise here. We have problems. It's a lot

of hard work. But it's a lifestyle. It's like a marriage and you have to work at it. You have to work on keeping your relationship with the land healthy."

Sam and Anne work six to seven hours a day, six days a week, during the growing season. "But it's not a backbreaking, scrape out a living operation," Sam said. "We still find time to relax and write." Like Anne, Sam is a poet. He is also a storyteller, specializing in Jack Tales. According to Anne, this part of their creative life is the way they "digest" their experience of the land. "Getting to know the land year by year, it affects us and we affect it," she said.

As I have digested my time with Sam and Anne, my mind has flashed back to my own farm experience in Unicoi County, comparing it to Sam and Anne's work at Celo. My mind has flashed back to my father's stories of breaking a steer to plow the steep hillsides during the Depression when all his family had to till the ground were mattocks and hoes. My grandparents on both sides were subsistence farmers. My father worked in a factory and raised corn, beans, and tobacco on the side. He laid chemical fertilizers to the land hoping to make ends meet for our family. I did my time in the tobacco patch.

Subsistence farming is the opposite of the environmentally sustainable farming Sam and Anne do. According to *Webster's*, to *sustain* is to provide nourishment beyond mere survival. *Subsistence* implies struggle for survival in meeting basic needs for food and shelter. *Subsistence* also implies limitation. As I see it, limited outlooks and perceptions are always a subsistence way of thinking. This is the substance of all stereotypical thinking, whether it is projected onto Appalachian mountain people, green folks, or any other group. It doesn't look beyond its own limited horizons.

Green is about a whole lot more than what we eat or wear. I keep thinking about those "red wiggler worms" that Sam said "showed up from he didn't know where" to work the compost and manure into rich, crumbly soil.

I'm starting me a compost pile. ❖

Janice Willis Barnett is a contributor to "Inside Appalachia," produced by West Virginia Public Broadcasting. She is the author of *Unicoi and Limestone Cove* (Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

How I Learned to Live Healthier, Save Money, and Be Kind to the Environment: One Green Girl's Story

Linda Behrend

I can call myself a "green girl" because my mother was a Green – Mary Fern Green. My children think it's hilarious that her last name was Green and her mother named her Fern. "Did people call her 'Green Fern'?" they ask. Sometimes they say my father, a naturalist, must have married her because of her name—he studied ferns, in addition to birds and wildflowers.

I can't recall exactly when I became an "environmentalist," but it has become something of an obsession. I can hardly stand to throw anything in the garbage. "There must be some use for this," I think. Thankfully, there is a convenient recycling station close to my house, and there are even some companies that will furnish a bin and pick up recyclables curbside. A real wake-up call for me was hearing that recycling just one aluminum can saves enough energy to power your television for three hours.

Since I live in a condominium, I bought an "Earth Machine" compost bin and put it under my deck. But you can make your own with wire and stakes or some sort of drum. For successful compost, you just need organic material (green and brown) and water to put into your bin or compost pile.

I keep a container near, or under, the kitchen sink for coffee grounds, tea bags, vegetable and fruit peels and scraps—just no meat, bones, fat, or milk products. The one exception is egg shells, which can be composted. When my kitchen container fills up, I take it out and empty into the outdoor compost bin. This is a good time to add water and/or "brown" material, which can be leaves, dried grass, and small twigs. You can even put dryer lint, hair, brown paper bags, and cardboard (toilet-tissue and paper-towel rolls) in your composter.

One of my neighbors has attached a rain barrel to the downspout from her gutter. It even has a convenient hose attachment she can use when watering her flowers and plants. And if you plant a row of marigolds at the edge of your garden, it will keep away rabbits and other

Rain barrel. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

pests in an earth-friendly way.

During lean years when my children were growing up, we used to have "little dab" suppers. One of my friends called them "gotta go" meals, meaning the leftovers have got to go. And a former neighbor, who had five children, always said their meals got a lot more interesting toward the end of the month, when she didn't have money left to go to the grocery store and was feeding her family with what was left in the cabinets.

I keep a container in the freezer for leftover cornbread, biscuits, stale bread, and the heels and crusts of sandwiches. When it comes time to make dressing at Thanksgiving or Christmas, I don't have to buy expensive breadcrumb mixes. In the refrigerator, I keep a mayonnaise jar to store cooking water, broth, and pot likker left over from cooking vegetables. Loaded with vitamins, the broth can be used to make soups, rice, or beans.

My friend Martha spreads out layers of seven opened-up newspaper pages and puts them in between the rows in her garden, weighting them down with rocks, to hold in moisture and keep down weeds. I save the comic sections to wrap gifts, especially for children. I've also found that brown paper grocery bags can be cut up to make excellent wrapping paper for sending packages in the mail. I use plastic grocery bags to line waste baskets, and I use the backs of envelopes for writing notes and grocery lists.

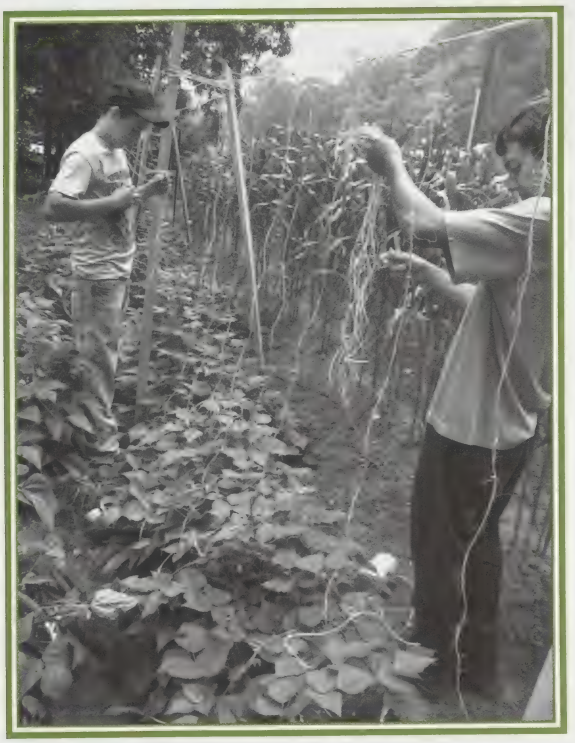
All of this is to say, reduce, reuse, recycle—and be kind to Mother Earth. She's the only one we've got. ❖

Linda Behrend is a librarian living in Knoxville, Tennessee. She works part-time in the Research Library at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Recycling bin. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

Halting the Patterns of Loss: Grow Appalachia's First Season

David Cooke & Christopher Porter



One way to understand the challenges facing Appalachia today is through the patterns of loss characterizing the region for the past thirty years. The disappearance of small manufacturing plants and jobs has devastated what were once thriving communities. In the coal industry, the transition from underground to surface mining meant the loss of well-paying jobs; it has also meant the literal erasure of entire communities and mountains as the hills are blown up and scraped into the valleys below. In addition to economic woes, the rise of prescription pill and methamphetamine abuse reached epidemic proportions, further unraveling the already frayed fabric of life in mountain communities.

When the Great Recession began, Appalachia was already reeling. Even though folks in the hills were used to hard times, the reduction of state, federal, and donor support of frontline social service agencies only served to exacerbate the strain faced by those in the mountains. However, to some, the new challenge was not looking to the outside for help but finding ways to tap the intangible strengths already in existence inside the region.

It was in this context that, in the fall of 2009, Tommy Callahan, vice president for Paul Mitchell Systems, Inc.—and a son of the mountains himself—contacted the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center at Berea College in Kentucky, on behalf of his boss, John Paul DeJoria. Moved by how the recession was affecting Americans, DeJoria wanted to help. But he didn't merely want to throw money at a problem. Rather, he wanted to empower people, to offer a hand up, not a handout.

Through the pledged support of DeJoria and conversations among the Loyal Jones Appalachian

Riley and Ricky learn the old-fashioned way to train pole beans. Photo by Jason Johnson.

Center and four regional nonprofits, Grow Appalachia was born. After only one growing season, it has quickly become a successful and welcome presence in the communities it serves.

The Grow Appalachia project began as a partnership among five groups: the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, the Pine Mountain Settlement School, the Red Bird Mission, the Henderson Settlement, and the Laurel County African American Heritage Center. To be successful, these groups agreed that they must capitalize on intangible positives of the region: a strong work ethic and a well-established network of community and faith groups, schools, and other organizations equipped to make the most of any opportunity.

Could Grow Appalachia, this untested rural community gardening approach, really have an impact on the nutritional deficits facing the region?

With access to fresh, nutritious food an ongoing issue in rural mountain communities and with hunger an increasing outcome of the recession, the vision of Grow Appalachia quickly became one of reversing these trends. Tied to these issues were others the partners hoped Grow Appalachia could help address, including the high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease caused in part by the prevalence of highly processed foods. By creating community gardens and teaching people to grow their own food, the partners recognized the opportunity to reverse some of those patterns of loss in the region—the loss of gardening and food cultivation knowledge as well as the decline in cooking and food preservation skills.

But a community gardening project faced several challenges. One of the greatest was creating a successful project model where one did not previously exist. In recent years, community gardening in urban areas has been on the rise. But as one gardener told Grow Appalachia, the caloric and nutritional impact of some of those gardens was negligible. The reasons were varied: a different set of priorities, startup stumbles, insufficient funding or staffing. But the primary focus of Grow Appalachia has always been to put high quality, homegrown produce on the tables and in the pantries of mountain families. Could Grow Appalachia, this untested rural community gardening approach, really have an impact on the nutritional deficits facing the region?

Another issue early on was estimating the total production of the gardens. How much food could be grown in the rocky soil of the hills and hollers? How successful would the efforts of participants be, considering that many were elderly, financially strapped, in poor health, or had little experience growing their own food?

Despite these challenges and unknowns, the project set ambitious goals of helping one hundred families grow their own food, developing systems to share surplus produce with older adults and the disabled, creating systems to market surplus produce, and encouraging participating families to help their neighbors in order to maximize the impact of the program.

Through DeJoria's generosity, Grow Appalachia was able to make solid capital investments. Site managers purchased many tools—including shovels, spades, trowels, and hoes—for the participating families, tools they could not otherwise afford. Tillers were procured for each site and flawlessly prepared the fertile but rocky soil. Food preservation equipment—hot water bath and pressure canners, canning and kitchen tools, jars and lids—was purchased for families. One participant cried when given a seventy-five-dollar pressure canner. She had wanted one for years but had never been able to afford it. Now she had the ability to put up food for the winter.

In order to participate in the program and receive the tools and other equipment, each gardener was required to attend classes on effective and safe handling of the tools. To address the unknowns surrounding food production, gardeners were asked to keep thorough records throughout the season. Project staff also interviewed gardeners onsite and made calculations based on these visits and conversations.

By the end of August, Grow Appalachia had helped ninety-six families create garden plots.

In addition to the individual garden plots, communal gardens were created at four partner sites

in eastern Kentucky. Grow Appalachia staff, employees of the partner programs, and community volunteers maintained them. Staff then distributed the produce to needy members of the community. Additionally, each site offered a series of classes on growing and preserving, taught mostly by county extension agents. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the educational programming was watching the participants teach each other.

In addition to the individual and communal gardens, various groups became a part of Grow Appalachia and swelled the numbers of families who received assistance. Several area schools and daycares planted gardens and maintained them through the summer. Produce was sent home with the children and harvested and distributed by school personnel. At a housing complex for the elderly, six of eight residents planted and harvested small garden plots that provided food and helped supplement their fixed incomes. Finally, twenty residents at a residential substance abuse rehabilitation facility grew a large garden with Grow Appalachia's assistance.

While initial estimates of the project's potential impact were somewhat conservative, not even the most optimistic of program partners could have anticipated Grow Appalachia's immense success. All told, some 400 people received assistance—growing gardens, attending heart-healthy cooking classes, and learning food preservation techniques. Because of the participating families' powerful desire to share the fruits of their labors with those around them, at least 2,800 people received some amount of fresh produce from Grow Appalachia gardens.

By the end of the season, best estimates indicated that Grow Appalachia gardens raised nearly 120,000 pounds of fresh produce. The Grow Appalachia field staff estimated that while the fresh vegetables and herbs were welcome on the families' tables, just as important was the fact that one-half to two-thirds of the harvest was frozen, canned, or dried in preparation for the winter. The preserved beans, tomatoes, corn, sauerkraut, and pickles have been like gold in an economy as challenging as Central Appalachia's. Based solely on the monetary value of the vegetables produced, preserved, and distributed, the program was an enormous success. The cost of the vegetables raised was an average of $1.25 a pound, significantly below market prices.

As more than one grower said, "We won't have much money this winter, but my kids won't go hungry"— a powerful thing to hear from the parents of

young children. Even more striking is that most families served by Grow Appalachia include not only the parents and children but also the extended family of cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and grandchildren.

One initial goal of the project, one thing the field staff encouraged participants to do, was to market surplus produce. The limited participation in the local farmers' markets by Grow Appalachia gardeners initially surprised the staff at each site. As it turns out, the need for this food was so great, and the bonds between the neighbors so strong, the participants gave away their extra food to family and friends rather than sell it to make money for themselves.

In addition to the sustenance provided by Grow Appalachia's gardens, many other important qualities of successful community gardening were present. Staff members at every site reported an enhanced sense of community among participants. Intergenerational relationships, once so vital to Appalachian communities, were rekindled as young folks worked side-by-side with community elders. Of equal importance were improvements in family incomes and a marked increase in the self-esteem of participants.

One of the most encouraging outcomes of Grow Appalachia's first season was the sharing of knowledge among gardeners, as the experienced folks gave of their time and skills to help those new to the art of gardening. In fact, these and other "incidental impacts" of Grow

Corn and beans planted in the mountain garden. Photo courtesy David Cooke.

Appalachia have far exceeded the hopes of even the most optimistic observers, as participants were consistently reconnected to the lost skills of food production and processing.

One woman, who, along with her husband, is unemployed, said, "We can't find work that pays money, so we turned Grow Appalachia into our job." They and their children worked their garden in Laurel County for six to eight hours a day, until brutally hot weather drove them inside in late July. But they fed their family all summer, and they canned, dried, and froze more than 400 containers of beans, tomatoes, corn, and pickles. Their fall garden produced well and further set them up for the winter. Without Grow Appalachia, they would have had no garden.

Another family served by the program lost everything in a catastrophic house fire. After scraping together enough for a mobile home, they had no money for a garden. "Without Grow Appalachia we wouldn't have had any of this," they said, pointing to a storage building filled with cases of canned food and boxes of potatoes from their garden.

As Grow Appalachia's second season begins, many lessons have been learned. In the first year, the five community partners created a program from scratch and laid the foundation for future success. The policies and protocols needed to move Grow Appalachia forward were painstakingly established and standardized by the partners. As a result, John Paul DeJoria and the Paul Mitchell organization renewed and increased funding for the second year.

In the second year, all the partner sites from the first season are back, and the program is expanding to help serve the St. Vincents' Mission in Floyd County, Kentucky; the Lincoln Organic Gardening Project in Harrogate, Tennessee; and High Rocks for Girls in Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties in West Virginia. All told, fourteen counties in four states and more than 260 families will be members of Grow Appalachia. Many tons of fresh, nutritious food will be placed on the tables and in the pantries of these hardworking folks, as they are reconnected to their communities, neighbors, and the skills necessary to feed themselves.

Grow Appalachia, in helping mountain families acquire the tools and skills which lead to greater food security, has created that elusive "hand up, not a handout" so often talked about but so seldom seen. ❖

David Cooke's family has been in southern West Virginia for over 150 years. The son of a coal miner and a one-room schoolteacher, he holds degrees from Berea College and West Virginia University. A former furniture maker, high school teacher, and county extension agent, he has been with the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center at Berea since 2005.

Christopher Porter lives and works in Kentucky. He is an avid gardener, seed saver, and writer, and his work has been published in the journals *Puerto Del Sol* and the *Roanoke Review*.

Isolated in My Holler

Llewellyn McKernan

I open my door to the vein of a creek: Merritt grubs to Mud River
which glides into the Guyandot that bounds toward the Ohio spilling
with the Missouri into the Mississippi, all of it hustling to the Gulf that

pours into the speechless Atlantic—that blue arm that sweeps everything
toward continents that join other seas, connecting me to West and East,
Europe and Asia, to all the bust and baggage of the world: we all

have so much in common, it hurts: water turning to salt in the blood
we spill, into the ink of words that break their promise before they even
get dry. Scratch the Gobi and you'll find Boston's dark harbor, swallow

snow in Paris, and roll onto an African savannah, where shinnying up the
Tree of Life, and balancing on its highest beam, you crack bean pods: their
meat, light as flakes, falls for the tender beasts that gather to munch its green.

Llewellyn McKernan is an award-winning poet and the author of four poetry collections and four books for children. Though she was born in Arkansas, West Virginia is her true home.

Bread and Butter Pickles: A Green Southern Treat

Katie Baker

For an assignment in East Tennessee State University's "Foodways of Appalachia" course, I researched a green American treat, bread and butter pickles. While similar recipes have likely been around for centuries, the bread and butter pickles that we know today date back to the early 1920s when Omar and Cora Fanning trademarked a generations-old family recipe for "sweet and sour" pickles. From Streator, Illinois, the Fannings made a living raising cucumbers. One season, the family fell on hard times, and Mr. Fanning made the resourceful decision to use the small cucumbers, which had been considered waste up until that point, to create an innovative side business. The resulting pickles were such a hit that Mrs. Fanning was able to barter with her local grocer, exchanging the pickles for household staples like bread and butter. The name stuck, and bread and butter pickles were an overnight success. They were simultaneously marketed as "old-fashioned" and the "latest thing," and their popularity quickly spread from the Midwest to the South, where bread and butter pickles remain a staple.

When I asked my father, Joe Baker of Greeneville, Tennessee, for his thoughts on bread and butter pickles, he stressed that "anything preserved that was sweet was a special treat." Growing up in Tennessee, he worked on a sharecropper's farm. "Poor people," he said, "generally ate the cheaper cuts of pork and beef, and as a condiment, bread and butter pickles were a great advantage. They made the meat tastier. In the 1950s and 1960s, pickling and preservation were still the main way of carrying summer produce into the winter."

Today, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers come to us fresh from Mexico and South America. "But in the '50s and the '60s," my dad went on to say, "that industry didn't exist. There was no international transport of produce like there is now."

For as long as I can remember, my aunt Lora Johnson of Gray, Tennessee, has been making bread and butter pickles. So it only made sense to consult her in my search for the perfect recipe. The very first cookbook she pulled from the shelf where she keeps old recipes and canning supplies just happened to be one my uncle's

Bread & Butter Pickles prepared by Lora Johnson. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

mother used when she was in high school, most likely in her home economics class. When my aunt flipped to the index to search for pickle recipes, she found a torn-out magazine page with a recipe for bread and butter pickles written on it. My uncle, Terry Johnson, estimates, from looking at the magazine page, that the recipe dates back to the 1950s.

Many people eat bread and butter pickles alongside pinto beans or deviled eggs. However, when asked to describe his favorite bread-and-butter pickle pairing, my father suggested eating them with fried pork chops, black-eyed peas, and cornbread. "Or perhaps they go best with pickled pig knuckles, often called trotters, and soda crackers," he added. He even hinted at eating them as a dessert in sweet pickle ice cream. "For sandwiches," he says, "dill pickles are fine, but for consumption by the slice, bread and butter pickles are divine." ❖

Bread and Butter Pickles

12 small cucumbers, no more than 1 ½ inches wide
8 medium onions, peeled
4 green peppers
¾ cup salt
6 ½ quarts water, divided
7 cups sugar
6 cups vinegar
3 tablespoons celery seed
¼ - ½ cup white mustard seed
1 teaspoon turmeric

Wash the cucumbers, onions, and peppers. Slice thin. Soak several hours or overnight in brine made by dissolving salt in six quarts of water. Drain. Combine sugar, vinegar, remaining water, and spices in large kettle. Bring to boil. Boil 3 minutes. Add vegetables. Boil 20 minutes or until vegetables are clear. Seal in hot sterilized containers.

A native of Greeneville, Tennessee, Katie Baker is a doctoral student in the College of Public Health at ETSU, where she works as a research assistant in the Skin Cancer Prevention Lab.

Reviving Adaland

Sarah Thomas

The intersection of Route 119 and Route 76 near Philippi, West Virginia, looks none too promising to the visitor seeking Adaland Mansion. Turning onto the two-lane blacktop and driving past a working coal tipple doesn't do much to raise expectations. But beyond the mine, just off to the right, there's a lush green hillside crowned by a jewel of a house humming with life once again after decades of neglect.

Adaland Mansion was built as a private home in 1870 by Augustus Modisett, a local farmer, banker, and Sheriff of Barbour County. Nearly 130 years later, the fully restored neo-Greek home opened its doors to a new era, bringing increased attention and a new tourism destination to central West Virginia. With executive director Ann Serafin at the helm, this lovely home has enjoyed a rebirth, becoming a destination for tours, dining, weddings, Civil War buffs, and antique car enthusiasts.

"A lot of people are discovering this part of West Virginia. We're rich in natural resources and in hospitality," said Serafin.

But the revival was a close call for the historic home that stood vacant for decades before the Philippi and All Seasons garden clubs intervened. In June of 1991 members asked then owner Anker Energy Coal Company if the mansion could be included on a tour of historic homes. After applying plenty of elbow grease to the dilapidated house and overgrown gardens, the clubs hosted 375 people in one day.

Volunteers continued to work to save the property, ultimately seeing it added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. That same year, Anker Energy deeded the home and its surrounding land to the city of Philippi. A three-year restoration project began in 1996, returning the home to its original glory and furnishing it with antiques and collectibles donated by individuals and organizations in the area. The walnut woodwork and brick, now restored, were made onsite by emancipated slaves.

The house became known as Adaland in the 1920s. West Virginia Court of Appeals Judge Ira E. Robinson bought the mansion and named it after his wife Ada. On display are many of their belongings, documents, and photographs. Outside are gardens, a pavilion, and a barn built in 1850. The barn is post- and-beam construction made from hardwoods grown on the property.

Adaland is a popular stopover for antique car enthusiasts. Serafin plans weekend buffets that allow clubs to take advantage of the mansion as a rest stop while giving other guests an impromptu car show in the parking lot. In addition, dinners are sometimes offered prior to shows at the American Mountain Theater in nearby Elkins.

"We do a lot of cooperative marketing to attract guests who come to see other historic sites in the area," said Serafin. "I think it's important that we work cooperatively. When people come, they want to see the history and culture of the whole area."

In 2010, Adaland saw more than 4,200 visitors, in a county with a population of less than 16,000. ❖

Sarah Thomas is a native of French Creek, West Virginia, now living in Asheville, North Carolina. She is director of development and public relations for Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain.

Adaland. Photo courtesy Adaland Mansion Development, Inc.

Porches

Jessie van Eerden

I lay on top of my gingham bedspread, since the night was warmer than most in early April, and I waited for my mother to come home. She was down the hill at Jessie Beatty Shaffer's, long after sundown and long after moonrise, talking on Jessie's sun porch, I guessed, where the colored glass things on the wide window sill—plates, bells, figurines of hens and horses—would have caught only the kitchen light falling slant. I kept drifting to sleep, but I woke every time Dad opened the screen door and hollered for Mom from our porch, every hour, into the night, like a bell tolling. I woke up worried at first, grabbing at my bedspread ruffle, but then I rested in his voice—it was two then three in the morning, and he called for her, loud and a little bit angry, a little bit crazy for her, a little lost. *Jan*—he yelled her name but softened it with a question—*you coming home?* As if to say, *don't forget me up here.* It was the only time he had ever put us to bed by himself, the only time this had ever happened. And on Jessie's sun porch, the windows would have been open to the warm night air, and in the hushed April dark with the ground silently thawing, I knew she heard him calling, I was sure. She and Dad hadn't fought, I could tell by Dad's voice. But it was spring, and perhaps there were things that Mom needed to say to Jessie, or to hear from her. Jessie was old even then, her skin paper thin and lotioned to silk, her husband gone, her sons grown. Maybe she told Mom how to handle the bundle of us four kids, how to can lamb's quarters—the wild greens with a pink root—how to make French knots, how to shape loaves or a quilt corner or a life, how the Settlement had boasted two schools at one time and gentler ties between families.

Dad hollered a last time, and I stayed awake and knew that Mom was safe and that she was coming. In my mind, I followed her quickened body as it climbed the hill to us, sweating in her blouse and jeans, passing the daffodils beside the road in their thick ring around the slate rock where Jessie had planted the bulbs for Mom's birthday. I imagined how the flowers fluttered in the dark as Mom passed, these flowers that wore the world in its raw, delicate form, awake in their bodies at night differently than in daylight when their trumpet faces were naked, exposed and too beautiful in the sun. In the dark they were covered, allowed something secret, and in the dark they were awake only to themselves.

I was awake, too, and I heard the screen door whine open and shut as she slipped in an hour before dawn. ❖

Jessie van Eerden's work has appeared in Houghton Mifflin's *Best American Spiritual Writing 2006*, *Oxford American*, and other publications. She holds a master of fine arts in nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa.

Illustration by Randy Sanders.

Winter Garden

Matt Prater

All year long you tasted sugar
welled up in rainbowed bunches from the earth,
and now you wait for it again
and call the waiting desolation.

Once, I was like this: red berry and pine,
brown green and red and white,
the varieties of sky, and poinsettias in the window -
I said it was diminished grace, and turned back in to sleep.

I ate my nuts and took my coffee black,
got fat and clinched up in my mind for months,
forgetful that the world is one round prism,
forgetful of the variety in that one thing, making up a winter garden.

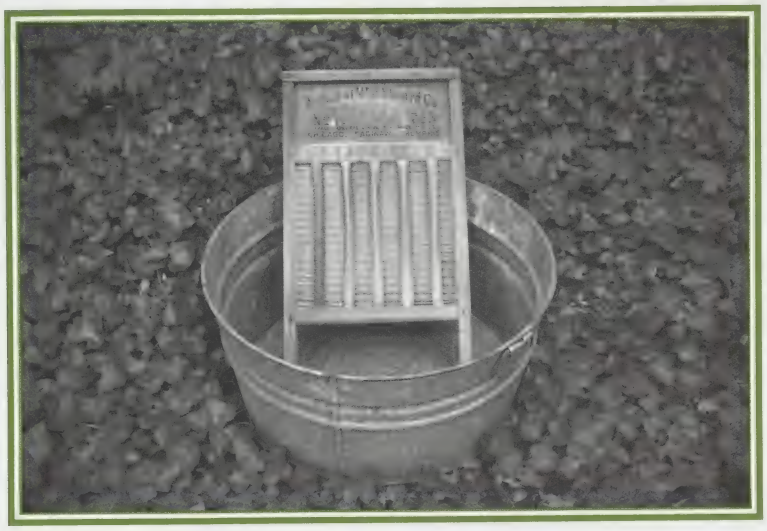
But now, I take my overcoat and walk,
on a coldish night, but not too cold to walk,
to the forest edge of Douglas fir and maple,
and between the green and iced white limbs I see

a baby coyote sauntering through the mast.
And hard to hunt, the rabbits being white,
I think I see her do what she can't do: reach down,
and dig beneath the ice and snow for acorns.

Matt Prater is a poet and student at Radford University in Virginia, and his work has been published in *Alcalines*, *NANO Fiction Magazine*, and *Sanctuary*, among others. He lives in Saltville, Virginia.

Greening in the Heart of Appalachia

Dolly Withrow



Driving on a blacktop road meandering alongside a creek and between two sun-splashed hills, I see goats defying gravity as they cling to a steep incline on my right. On the left, I see Black Angus cattle grazing languidly in a lush meadow at the base of the hill. I know my far-away neighbors who own both the goats and the cattle. Since moving into a small country cottage just north of Charleston, West Virginia, I have come to realize that neighbors in the country can live several miles away. I live among good people who treat the environment with the utmost kindness, although I have not heard one of them mention the words "environment" and "green." Living in this rural area and in the heart of Appalachia reminds me of my childhood and of my grandparents with whom I lived. Looking back down a dusty road of memories, I know their treatment of our world was gentle.

I have a city friend who is conscious of the environment and of her need to protect it. Since everything from cosmetics to cat litter to clothing can harm the environment, my friend stays busy recycling, researching, and rethinking all she has done on any given day to save Mother Earth.

My "green" friend does admit, however, that she uses paper towels. When I was a child, my grandmother used rags that had at one time served other purposes. In their former lives, they might have been undershirts or handkerchiefs or tablecloths. Handkerchiefs could be used for flirting or for wiping noses and children's sticky hands. Never did we use tissues one time and toss them into plastic bags. My Grandmother Frame used rags for everything from dusting furniture to washing dishes to cleaning walls. She used Octagon soap and a knuckle-scraping washboard to do laundry. After the clothes were wrung by hand, they were hung on outdoor lines regardless of the weather. Like my country neighbors, my grandmother unknowingly cared for the environment. My city friend uses an electric washer and an electric dryer. In addition to adding detergent to water heated with electricity, she uses a liquid mixture to make the clothes smell sweet and feel soft.

Each summer, my grandfather planted a garden. I walked behind him dropping three kernels of corn into each hole he had dug in the reluctant clay soil. He also planted lettuce, beans, and tomatoes, and as they grew, he would painstakingly pick bugs from the underside of

Washboard. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

leaves. He never used pesticides. He carried buckets of water from the well in our side yard. At the end of a golden summer day, he would come in from the garden, stomping his feet to remove small bits of clay from dress shoes that at one time had been worn with a suit. He was recycling but didn't know it.

When my grandfather shopped for groceries, he descended our hill on foot and carefully picked his way down a wooded path where sun and shadow danced on the moss-covered ground. At the bottom of the hill, he walked across a log that spanned a narrow creek. Then he stepped on a blacktop road where few cars traveled and headed for a small grocery store on the other side. After entering the store and giving his order to the only employee in the one-room structure, he placed his meager purchases in a burlap bag and threw the bag over his shoulder. He used that same burlap bag for years.

When my green friend shops, she pushes a plastic button to open her electric garage door. Backing her "green" car into the street, she drives to the store amid heavy traffic. Her car and the store are both air-conditioned in summer and heated in winter. She has a couple of those eco-friendly cloth bags, but they hardly hold all her purchases, so with a sense of guilt, she's forced to use plastic. Her guilt is assuaged, though, when she drives in her air-conditioned car to a recycle center to return the bags.

My friend no longer uses bottled water because of the everlasting damage plastic does to the environment and, according to experts, to us when water and plastic get too cozy for too long. My friend hasn't thought much about it, and I'm not about to remind her, but almost everything in her large house has some plastic in it. While she returns those little plastic bags, she doesn't think about her plastic computer, television, telephone, electrical outlets, and even the plastic that pretends to be wood as it wraps around her windows. Her guilt might be unbearable.

I know of no one—not my good country neighbors, nor my good city friend—who would want to return to the hardships of the past. Winston Churchill was right. There are times when it's better to jaw-jaw than to war-war, but is that true of jawing about the environment? Should we continue to jaw-jaw because it's better than returning to the days of Octagon soap and burlap bags, or should we work toward encouraging American ingenuity to provide solutions for using our own resources, creating jobs, and saving our world at the same time? ❖

A retired English professor, Dolly Withrow is the author of four books.

Getting Lessons in between

Fred Sauceman

Editor's Note: At the time of this writing, Mrs. Cooper was listed by *Guinness* as the world's oldest living person. *Guinness* subsequently reported that a Brazilian woman is forty-eight days older.

Besse Brown's azure eyes brightened when her parents told her a new school was being built, only nine miles from her home in Boones Creek, Tennessee. She had always wanted to be a teacher, ever since first grade.

That new school opened on October 2, 1911, in Johnson City, a post-Civil War railroad community. In fact it was a railroad man, George L. Carter, who made sure Johnson City would win the town-against-town battle and be the home of East Tennessee State Normal School. Multimillionaire Carter, whose laborers had laid out the Clinchfield Railroad and whose coal mines fueled its locomotives, gave away his farm so Besse Brown and others with similar ambitions could study practical subjects like running a household, alongside theoretical ones like Latin poetry.

Above all, East Tennessee State Normal School was created to educate competent and polished teachers. In Besse Brown's day, there were people teaching in the public schools who had no college training at all. Some hadn't even finished high school. And so, in an effort to raise the level of literacy and knowledge all across the state, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill in 1909 calling for the creation of normal schools in each of the three grand divisions, East, Middle, and West.

That legislation would change Besse Brown's life. She hopped a train in Gray Station and rode to Johnson City, where she boarded with an aunt. From there she rode a trolley car to the site of Carter's former farm, now populated with professors who held higher education pedigrees from all over the world.

She took her education seriously. To chemistry class one day in 1914, she wore her very best dress. But a chemical solution spilled out of an errant test tube and ruined it. She never forgot the incident.

Gilbreath Hall, where Besse Brown Cooper took those classes, is still standing.

Besse Cooper is still living.

Besse Brown Cooper at the age of 114. Photo by Brad Lifford.

At the age of 114 ½ , as of this writing, she is the oldest person on record in the world.

Her son Sidney, now 75, says she loved East Tennessee State Normal School, and that love has continued throughout her extremely long and fulfilling life.

Besse Brown Cooper wore her Normal School class ring for 92 years. It had to be cut off her finger in October of 2009.

"Her hand was swelling, and the staff at the nursing home feared that the ring might cut off my mother's circulation, so they asked permission to cut off the ring," says her son Sidney, in the conference room of the facility where his mother now lives, in Monroe, Georgia.

"That ring was worn completely slick, as smooth as this tabletop. She never took it off. She wore it when she gardened, washed clothes, when she cooked."

Sidney Cooper himself is a symbol of his mother's fondness for the Normal School and the opportunities it gave her. Her third of four children, he is named for the very first president of East Tennessee State Normal School, Sidney G. Gilbreath, a man Besse Cooper deeply admired.

Other than that discarded dress, Besse's only disappointment about her education at the Normal School was the dropping of German classes. Caught in the xenophobia that swept the country when World War I broke out in 1914, administrators at the Johnson City school cut German from the curriculum.

"Mother loved every subject she ever studied," said her son. "At that period of time, a country girl going to college was pretty rare.

"That education stayed with her. She read constantly. She encouraged us to read. We got books for Christmas. She read the comics to us every Sunday."

Besse Cooper became the world's oldest person on January 31, 2011, upon the death of Eunice G. Sanborn of Jacksonville, Texas. Besse's grandson Paul, who visits her almost every day, was the first to break the news.

"When she became the oldest person in the world, I had the good fortune to tell her," said Paul, age 42. "She paused and said, 'No, honey, I don't think so.' 'Yes, ma'am,' I said, 'the woman in Texas passed away this morning, and you're the oldest person in the world. How does that feel?'

"She paused and she said, 'Well, I think it feels pretty good.' And then she paused again and she said, 'I think I'd like a box of chocolates.'

"I said, 'Which kind would you like?'

"'I'd like the assorted kind,'" she answered.

When Paul brought the box of chocolates into his grandmother's room, he told her he was going to read aloud the names of the candy varieties and asked her to stop him when he came to just the right one for her first taste. He read off raspberry, dark chocolate, truffle. And then coconut. That's when his grandmother stopped him.

"Oh, you used to make the best coconut cake," Paul remembered.

"I know I did, didn't I?" she answered.

"And then she looked at me and said: 'I still do.'"

Paul visits his grandmother usually at night, and they talk for about 30 minutes. The conversations are shorter now, but often they turn to food: collard greens versus turnips. Biscuits. Apple pie. Sauerkraut. Foods Besse has been loyal to ever since she lived in Tennessee.

"Cooking has always been conveyed to me by her as a joy, not a burden, not something she became tired of," Paul tells me. "She speaks of food in a very fond, passionate way.

"Her biscuits were absolutely the best. They weren't too doughy and not too hard. They weren't too lard-laden or fried-tasting."

"She could make anything out of apples," Sidney adds. "Butter, jelly, sauce. She grew apples in Tennessee and could make the best apple pie. Here in Georgia she would go out and pick up these gnarled apples, ones I wouldn't even bother with. A few days later she'd have a nice apple pie made out of them.

"She didn't let anything go to waste. She knew what to do on a farm. She grew winter squash here in Georgia when nobody around had heard of it. She knew how to cure meat, smoke sausage."

Sidney said his mother was always interested in

Top: Besse Brown Cooper as a young lady. Bottom: Besse in the 1970s. Photos courtesy the Cooper family.

politics. When women were given the right to vote in 1920, she was among the first to register them in Walton County, Georgia.

She voted in the 2008 presidential election, and when she learned that an African American man had won, she told her grandson, "I think that's a very good thing."

Besse was a Democrat until later in life. Ironically, although she has lived in Georgia since 1918, her son Sidney says her dislike of Jimmy Carter turned her away from the Democrats.

"Ronald Reagan was one of her heroes, and she often told me she thought Franklin Roosevelt was the best president," Sidney said.

It was the promise of better money at the end of World War I that led Besse from the schoolhouse in Tiger Valley, Tennessee, to a place called Between, equidistant from Loganville and Monroe, Georgia, on Highway 78, the main route to Atlanta before the coming of the interstates.

In Between, she took over a two-room school which, Sidney said, she "straightened out." Another teacher was responsible for the first three grades, and Besse taught grades four through seven. When she learned that some unruly students upset a previous teacher so badly she had to go out and walk the sidewalk to gain her composure, Besse reportedly said, "If anybody walks up and down the sidewalk it'll be them. It won't be me."

The school in Between would eventually be rated the best in the county.

Sidney said his mother was always in control, in charge. When he started attending the little school in Between in 1941, he was one of the last students in the springtime to cast off his shoes.

"Here everyone else was barefoot, and I was ordered to keep wearing shoes until very late in the spring by my mother," Sidney recalled. He jokingly told her that sometimes he wished he had a Georgia mother, since Tennessee mothers were too strict.

By the time Sidney entered school, his mother had given up teaching, but she insisted on checking her four children's homework, and Sidney said she was especially skillful in talking him through word problems. "She taught me to like mathematics," he added.

Sidney would go on to be an industrial engineer in the apparel industry.

"She's still improving the world, still teaching us all," Paul said. "She had teaching in her, always."

Besse never lived in Tennessee again after

departing for Georgia in 1918, but she and her family would come back to Boones Creek about once a year and spend a week in what they called the "home house."

"We love the lush, green countryside and pasture fields of East Tennessee," Sidney said.

One of Sidney's favorite stories, though, involves his grandparents' aborted attempt to leave the state, in November of 1900, for Arkansas, the "land of opportunity." Besse's parents and uncle and aunt built a houseboat and got as far downriver as Chattanooga, where they were grounded on a sandbar in the middle of the Tennessee. They were advised to return to Upper East Tennessee because of a yellow fever outbreak in Arkansas, and they built the two-story "home house" on 15 acres of land in Boones Creek. Besse remembered that river trip because at age four she was tied around the waist with rope to keep her from tumbling into the cold waters of November.

Sidney and Paul talk lovingly and at length about the astonishing life of Besse Cooper. Among their most vivid memories is hearing her singing in the kitchen: "Life is Like a Mountain Railroad," a song that reminded her of riding the narrow-gauge tracks on the way to her first teaching job in Carter County, Tennessee.

Sidney laughs when he thinks of how his mother impressed her cousins by subscribing to the

Besse Brown Cooper and daughter-in-law Edith. Photo by Brad Lifford.

Ladies' Home Journal in the 1930s. He marvels at the fact that his 114-year-old mother has never had surgery. Only twice has she been in the hospital: for the birth of her fourth and last child and for stomach tests once.

Besse lived on her own until she was 105. Once she reached the age of 110, staff from the *Guinness Book of World Records* initiated regular contact with her family.

Among the red-letter days of my life was February 22, 2011, when I had the opportunity to be in the presence of Besse Cooper, less than a month after she became the world's oldest person. She had her hair done that day, in preparation for our visit, and she put her teeth in, a sign, her family says, that something good was anticipated that day.

I avoid the obvious "secret to a long life" question, knowing it will arise naturally in my conversations with Sidney and Paul.

"My grandmother doesn't worry about the things she can't affect," says Paul. "She's not a worrier. Everything was interesting to her, and everything was something to learn. She enjoys watching her grandchildren make the world a better place.

"It's very humbling, knowing so many people much younger are suffering and in poor health. To have lived a life this long and of this quality is just phenomenal. She has enriched my life in ways I can't even describe to you." ❖

Fred Sauceman is the editor of *Now & Then*.

From Besse Cooper's Kitchen

Swiss Steak

1 pound round steak, cut into serving pieces
Salt and pepper
Flour
3 tablespoons Crisco
1 onion, sliced
4 ripe tomatoes, skinned and sliced

Pound the steak. Salt and pepper it and dip in flour. Have the Crisco melted and hot in Dutch oven. Brown the steak on both sides. Cover with water. Add sliced onions and tomatoes that have been chopped. Cover and simmer for 3 hours. When done the gravy is already made and is delicious.

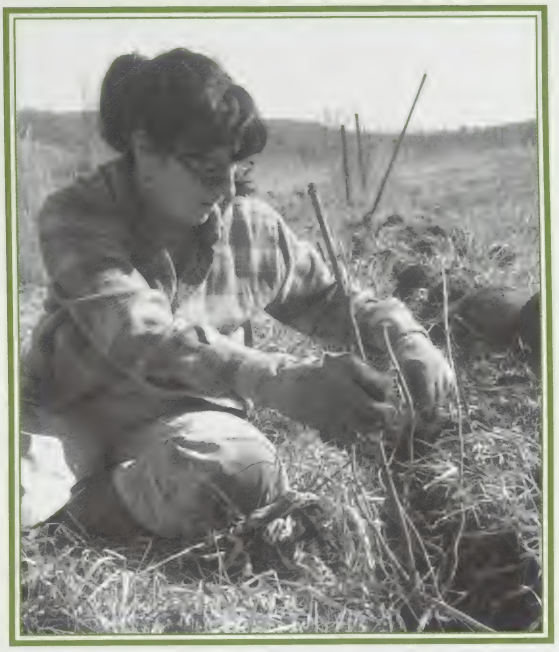
Boiled Custard

4 cups sweet milk
1/2 cup sugar or more if you like it sweeter
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 whole eggs
3 egg yolks
1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix the milk, sugar, and salt and scald in a double boiler. Beat the eggs thoroughly. Stir some of the hot milk into the eggs. Put the egg mixture into the boiler with the milk and vanilla and cook until it coats a spoon. Stir all the time while it is cooking. Strain it. If it cooks too long, it will not be smooth. Beat it with a mixer on high.

The Herbal Sage: Blending "Green" Teas for Good Health, for the Environment, and for the Economy

Caitlin Kight



If you have visited a Whole Foods grocery store in the eastern half of the U.S. of late, you may have noticed a new type of tea stocked on the shelves—some of the many healthful and delicious blends produced by the Herbal Sage Tea Company based in southeastern Ohio. You may even have run into the Herbal Sage herself, Maureen Burns-Hooker, who chaperoned the introduction of her products to each store. She made the tour not just for business reasons but also in the interest of pursuing a goal that is nearer and dearer to her heart: introducing the art of herb cultivation, accompanied by a healthy respect for the natural world, to a wider audience. In addition to free samples of her brews, Burns-Hooker also answered Whole Foods customers' questions about gardening and tea blending.

Originally the owner of two successful vintage clothing stores in Cleveland, Ohio, Burns-Hooker began the transition into her current career after she lost her entire stock in a fire. While debating her next move during the aftermath of the devastation, she saw a flier for herb school. Long interested in gardening and growing her own produce, she enrolled in the class and soon was selling small quantities of home-blended herbal teas.

Unfortunately, the budding Herbal Sage did not encounter many like-minded individuals while based in urban northern Ohio. It was not until she started an herb course based in Granville, Ohio, that she met a new and supportive group of herbalists who introduced her to the fertile grounds of Meigs County in southern Ohio. When Burns-Hooker visited the small town of Rutland to meet renowned local herbalist Paul Strauss, she felt a connection to the area and decided to buy a small farm—not only the first piece of land she owned but also the first place where she was able to "honor plants *in situ*." She has since expanded her holdings, using the Appalachian facility as a place for both growing and learning about plants.

Indeed, a love of herbs, rather than entrepreneurialism, is at the root of the Herbal Sage's efforts; she describes her business as allowing her to "do what I like and sustaining myself with what I do." Plants, she says, are both powerful and consistent over time. The more she learns, the more she realizes there is to discover—a breadth of potential wisdom that she finds "very humbling." Burns-Hooker is often in touch with other herbalists so she can take advantage of their experience and expertise. Fifteen years in the field have given her a wealth of knowledge, which she, in turn, shares with others. She recently delivered a lecture to first- and second-year medical students at the Ohio University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Athens. One of her main themes was that "alternative medicines are no longer alternative." She reports that locally, at least, people are receptive to herbal treatments because they remember the "natural cures" employed by their grandparents. She is hopeful that this willingness to sample traditional medicines might be helpful in

Maureen Burns-Hooker planting elderberry. Photo courtesy David Hooker.

the fight against diseases such as diabetes, which is "rampant" in the region.

Aware that customers trust her products to make them feel healthy and wholesome, the Herbal Sage puts a great deal of thought and effort into each blend. When developing the formula for a new brew, her first consideration is, of course, the benefit that it will confer. She sells teas that calm coughs, promote digestion, strengthen the immune system, and bring on relaxation. No matter how much a particular formula may improve health, however, Burns-Hooker is more than aware that it will be a hard sell if the benefit is not accompanied by a pleasant taste. Her second goal, then, is to achieve a flavor that will keep consumers sipping. Once a recipe has been developed, the next step is to acquire enough materials to produce it in bulk. Unfortunately for someone who is interested in selling a "green" product, this inevitably requires using some ingredients that are not local. The Herbal Sage is forced to step with a larger carbon footprint than she might like and is not able to oversee the growth of all the herbs she uses. She would like to make her business "greener" in the future, but for now she has to be satisfied with purchasing ingredients from trusted cultivators who share her interests in growing sustainably and, where possible, organically.

Burns-Hooker is particularly careful to avoid purchasing from individuals who call her up unexpectedly in the hopes of selling herbs that have been wildcrafted—picked by hand from nature. The recent growth of interest in traditional herbal medicines has led to over-harvesting, causing the depletion of both individual species of plants and their habitats. In order to help combat these problems, the Herbal Sage has joined the United Plant Savers (UpS), a group founded by fellow herbalist Rosemary Gladstar to promote the protection of native North American medicinal plants. Burns-Hooker's Rutland farm is contiguous with UpS's 378-acre Goldenseal Sanctuary, named after a plant (also called yellowroot) that has been so over-harvested that it is now endangered. Thanks to its close proximity, the Herbal Sage is not only a member of the sanctuary but has also sponsored events there in an effort to teach others about plant preservation and sustainable methods of herb harvesting.

The urge to protect plants and the land on which they grow is a product, the Herbal Sage says, of lessons she was taught as a girl—to be responsible and accountable and to provide for others. Dedication, persistence, and perseverance were values instilled in her from a young age, and Burns-Hooker credits this collection of qualities with helping her thrive entrepreneurially while managing to adhere to her "green" principles and find a balance between business and outreach. In fact, this balance is another reason the Herbal Sage has visited so many Whole Foods stores. In addition to teaching consumers about the benefits of herbal brews, she was conducting research on who the customers were, where they came from, what sorts of ailments they suffered from, and which types of products would benefit them most. These details allow Burns-Hooker to develop successful blends that not only keep her company in the black but also increase the usefulness and popularity of herbal tea as an alternative medicine. In the long run, this could wean some customers off harsh or expensive pharmaceutical treatments and increase support for initiatives that protect the plants needed for each brew.

As Herbal Sage products hit more and more shelves, Burns-Hooker is able to hire more and more helping hands, allowing her not only to save the local habitat but also benefit the local economy. She currently has no full-time employees but works with up to six people a month when mixing, weighing, packaging, and shipping her products. The number of part-time helpers has recently increased and is poised to continue doing so. The Herbal Sage hopes this growth will allow her to take on permanent employees in the near future. She was recently contacted online by Korean buyers interested in purchasing her Mother's Milk formula, allowing her almost literally to "sell tea in China." Electronic resources such as herbalsage.com have allowed Burns-Hooker to reach more potential customers and to connect with fellow herbalists who share literature and advice about growing herbs.

For anyone interested in creating an herbal tea blend, the Goldenseal Sanctuary offers a variety of educational programs open to potential growers of all ages. The sanctuary also serves as a repository for native medicinal plant germplasm and is a propagation facility to produce seedlings for farmers interested in growing herbs on a commercial scale. The sanctuary and experts like the Herbal Sage ensure that many generations to come can cure what ails them with a refreshing cup of tea made from locally-grown herbs. ❖

Caitlin Kight is a science editor for Editage, a professional editing service, and a freelance nature writer. She lives in Falmouth, the United Kingdom.

Pittsburgh: City of Green Champions

Mike Schiller

Looking down from the Hill District to the cauldron of smokestacks belching fire and smoke, a riverbank littered with coal barges and railroads, and a bottomland saturated with muddy streets and gritty row houses pressed hard against the Allegheny River, Boston writer James Parton described Pittsburgh in 1868 as "hell with the lid off." A century and a half later we still haven't forgiven Parton, but he would no longer recognize the city that Pittsburgh has become.

Indeed, Pittsburgh has made a remarkable transformation, again being named "America's Most Livable City" by The Economist Intelligence Unit in 2011. This marks the fourth time in the last five years that Pittsburgh has achieved the number-one ranking in studies by *The Economist* and by *Forbes* magazine. Consistently, Pittsburgh ranks in the top ten of most similar rankings. On a world stage, Pittsburgh's selection as host city for the G-20 meetings in 2009 was a global recognition of the local commitment to sustainability.

While there is clearly a multitude of factors that evolve a city from "hell" to swell, at least some of the buzz has to do with our "green" buildings, including green industrial and office structures. Indeed Pittsburgh is now well-recognized as a world leader in the green building field.

The Green Building Alliance (GBC) has been playing a part in this ongoing transformation since 1993. The region's fifty-seven projects certified by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), many of them high-profile "firsts," stand as tangible evidence of the region's and the GBA's success. One of those "firsts," the David L. Lawrence Convention Center (LEED Gold-Certified) both hosted and showcased many of the issues under discussion at the G-20.

These green buildings in Pittsburgh owe their development to a unique combination of efforts among non-profit organizations, private companies, government, academia, and the city's foundation community. Begun as a cooperative effort to promote more environmentally-sensitive building practices,

Workmen installing a green roof on the Falk building in Pittsburgh. Photo courtesy The Green Building Alliance.

the Green Building Alliance was initiated by four existing environmental groups that recognized the need for dramatic changes in the design, construction, remodeling, and eventual disposal of new and existing buildings. The groups were:

- Conservation Consultants, Inc. (CCI)
- Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP)
- Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC)
- Group for Recycling in Pennsylvania (GRIP)

This was the same year that the U.S. Green Building Council began operations. It took four years to establish sufficient momentum (and funding from the Heinz Endowments) to hire the first full-time executive director, Rebecca Flora. Once that happened, the GBA's educational efforts could really expand, and its ability to influence and assist in the greening of key development projects increased significantly. In 2000, Pittsburgh had two of the first twelve green buildings in the nation to be LEED-certified by the USGBC: PNC Firstside and the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

"Progressive companies make themselves accountable for their economic, social, and environmental impact," said Gary Jay Saulson, senior vice president and director of corporate real estate for PNC Realty Services. "To us, good environmental sense makes good economic sense. What we've found with PNC Firstside Center, for example, is that people want to work here, even to the point of seeking employment just to work in our building. Absenteeism has decreased, productivity has increased, recruitment is better, and turnover is less."

This early adoption of green design and construction principles and practices on a few amazingly visible projects, coupled with the ongoing commitment of local foundations, has resulted in Pittsburgh's leadership in the growth of green building construction. The GBA has worked hard to reach participants involved in all aspects of the building industry ecosystem. According to John Bonassi, principal vice president of business development for the architectural firm Astorino (as quoted in *The Master Builder*), GBA "can be credited for bringing sustainable design to Pittsburgh, focusing on educating the industry, as well as consumers."

Green building is not a fad brought about by architects or environmentalists; it is an obvious market trend and a necessary response to volatile and rising energy prices. According to McGraw-Hill Construction, 88 percent of the entire commercial construction industry is incorporating green products or features into their projects, and that percentage is expected to increase even more, regardless of general economic conditions, as energy prices continue to escalate.

Further, studies have shown, and GBA's experience supports, that green buildings are not only about saving the environment. They are about saving money. The greatest costs for companies with respect to their buildings are actually associated with employee illness and turnover, both of which have been shown to go down drastically in companies that are housed in green buildings. Second to employee-related costs, green buildings generate substantial energy savings, an average of 30 percent over conventional buildings of the same size. Additionally, green buildings reduce carbon emission by 35 percent, reduce water use by 30 to 50 percent, and save costs on waste of 50 to 90 percent over their conventional counterparts.

Green buildings are here to stay. The results are unequivocal. According to Mike Bernard, project manager for Pittsburgh's Oxford Development Company, "Green building is no longer special; it's just best practice."

PNC Financial Services Group now has more newly-constructed buildings certified by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) than any other company on earth: eighty-three. Green buildings have been built or rehabilitated locally by Google, Giant Eagle, Heinz, Highmark, REI, Point Park University, Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, Pittsburgh Opera, WYEP-FM, the Felician Sisters, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the Green Building Alliance itself, just to name a few. In fact GBA's office is the only LEED for Commercial Interiors platinum-certified building in western Pennsylvania.

The additional 207 projects in western Pennsylvania that are LEED-registered (not yet completed or certified) with USGBC promise continued leadership for the region even while other projects continue to stretch the definition of green building. Phipps Conservatory's Center for Sustainable Landscapes expects to exceed LEED platinum and meet the International Living Building Challenge (www.ilbi.org). Chatham

University has begun design for its 338-acre Eden Hall campus, which will be a centerpiece for its School of Sustainability and the Environment. And the east-end neighborhood of Larimer is striving to regenerate itself as a LEED for Neighborhood project, a new and larger USGBC initiative that expands the boundaries for green thinking.

As the industry accepts the premise of green building, GBA has started to focus more on developing and promoting green products to serve the industry, as well as gathering and tracking performance measures that allow for ever better life-cycle assessments and project justifications. We are looking forward to some great industry-leading, industry-challenging projects over the next several years.

"Pittsburgh is clearly a national leader in green building," says former USGBC CEO Christine Ervin. "It is most fitting that a city that was characterized in the past as having numerous environmental challenges is one of the true leaders in the world for environmental progress."

LEED certification

At this time, the most widely recognized green building rating system in the U.S. is LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. It is an internationally recognized green building certification system with third-party verification. New and existing buildings can register with the appropriate LEED rating system to attain certification at the basic (Certified), Silver, Gold, or Platinum level, depending on the number of points achieved. More information can be found online at www.usgbc.org.

Nine Green Building "Firsts"

- PNC Firstside Center, first green financial institution
- Carnegie Mellon University Steever House, first green university dormitory
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, first green children's museum
- Point Park University Dance Complex, first green university dance complex
- Phipps Conservatory Welcome Center, first green welcome center
- Senator John Heinz History Center, first green Smithsonian property
- WYEP, first green radio station
- David L. Lawrence Convention Center, first green convention center
- CONSOL Energy Center, first green newly constructed National Hockey League facility

Seven Reasons Why Green Buildings Matter

- On average, U.S. citizens spend 90 percent of their time indoors.
- Buildings use 40 percent of the world's total energy, 25 percent of wood harvest, and 16 percent of clean water, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.
- Construction and operation of buildings result in 35-40 percent of municipal landfill, 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, and 40 percent of acid rain.
- The building industry is the nation's largest manufacturing activity, representing more than 50 percent of the country's wealth and 13 percent of Gross Domestic Product.
- Poor indoor air quality causes 150 million lost workdays and $15 billion in lost productivity per year in the U.S.
- According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, air quality inside buildings is two to five times worse than outside air.
- An estimated 65 million tons of demolition waste are generated each year (31 percent coming from residential and 69 percent coming from nonresidential), yet only 20-30 percent of demolition waste is reused or recycled.

Ten Benefits of Green Buildings (the abridged list)

Energy Efficiency

- Environmentally-designed buildings consume as little as 20 percent of the energy required in other code-compliant buildings.
- Daylighting can reduce artificial lighting costs by 60 percent.
- Commissioning, a quality assurance process in the LEED system certification, can save as much as 40 percent of a building's utility costs.

Water Conservation

- Water efficiency measures in buildings can easily reduce water usage by 20 percent or more.
- The David L. Lawrence Convention Center in

Pittsburgh reduced potable water use by 57 percent and eliminated the use of potable water for sewage conveyance through onsite greywater treatment and recycling.

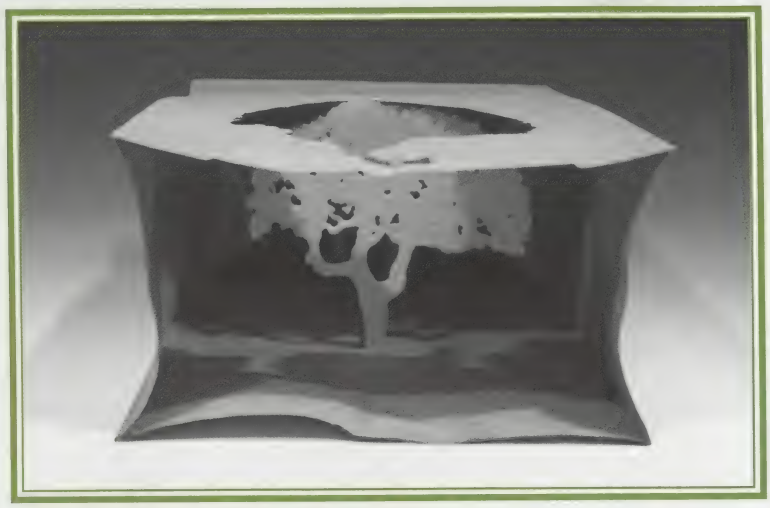
Increased Productivity

- Productivity increases can amount to savings of up to fifteen times the annual energy bill.
- In a preliminary study of PNC Firstside Center, two business units had their voluntary terminations decrease by 83 percent and 57 percent after they moved to the new facility. During the same period, a control business unit with the same function had a decrease of just 11 percent.
- A study of retail sales in a chain of over 100 similar stores found that, all other things being equal, stores with skylighting experienced a 40 percent increase in sales over those without skylighting.
- A study of test scores in three school districts found that children in day-lit classrooms had 18 percent higher test scores through the year, compared with those without daylighting.
- A study over five years of 6,000 workers in seventy U.S. organizations analyzed eighteen basic design features (lighting, accessibility, temperature) and found that improvements of these features resulted in productivity gains of 15 percent of managers' salaries and 17 percent of clerical employees' salaries. ❖

Mike Schiller is executive director of the Green Building Alliance, based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is a native of the city and founder and former president of Confluence Technologies and Venture Outdoors.

Travis Graves: Art Maker

Randy Sanders



In the center of the gallery, atop a spotlighted, white display pedestal is a brown paper lunch bag lying on its side. Surrounded by other artists' baroque-in-comparison work, the little bag looks out of place. Five steps closer, it is apparent the top side of the bag has been cut. Closer still and one recognizes the cutout is the silhouette of a tree. Finally, just steps from the pedestal, comes the payoff—the cutout has not been removed from the bag at all. Instead, the cutout has been manipulated into the positive form of the same tree that, from a distance, first appeared as a silhouette. Welcome to the intriguing visual world of Travis Graves.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked the birth of what some historians refer to as the third era of modern American environmentalism. *Earthrise*, the photograph of Planet Earth hanging over the lunar horizon taken from Apollo 8 in December of 1968, single-handedly raised public consciousness about the planet's fragility. It was the first picture of our world taken from space. A number of visual artists, particularly sculptors, began dealing with ecological issues around this time. The best known of them, the American Robert Smithson, created the iconic *Spiral Jetty*, a 1500-foot-long rock and earth spiral-shape protruding into Utah's Great Salt Lake. The art movement now known as environmental art was born. Three years after Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day in 1970, fellow Midwesterner and future artist Travis Graves was born in Sioux City, Iowa.

"Actually," Graves begins, "I grew up in Leeds, which is like a suburb of Sioux City. A ten-minute bike ride and I was in cornfields. I could go up two blocks from my house and be in undeveloped land. Our address was Sioux City, but Leeds was like a town within a town.

"From early on, I remember enjoying using my hands, taking things apart, making forts in the woods—that kind of thing."

Graves attended Iowa State University as an undergraduate and received a bachelor of fine arts in drawing, painting, and printmaking. He received his master of fine arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where his primary focus was sculpture. As a graduate student, he earned the International Sculpture Center's Outstanding Student Achievement

Cut paper bag, 2007. Photo courtesy Travis Graves.

in Contemporary Sculpture Award. In 2005, Graves became a faculty member in the Department of Art and Design at East Tennessee State University.

"We were living in Milwaukee when I interviewed for the job in Tennessee. Neither Ann [his wife] nor I had experienced the Southeast—we'd seen most of the country, but not this part. Coming from the Midwest, we'd heard the clichés about Appalachia, but hearing about a place is not the same as experiencing it.

"I interviewed for the job in April. There was still snow on the ground in Wisconsin, but down here it was full-on spring. Dogwoods were in bloom, and I was holding my jaw in my hand. There were mountains and substantial forests, and all of that was really appealing to us. So, I accepted the position."

So began the Appalachian chapter of Travis Graves' story.

Graves' artwork is rooted in familiar materials such as trees, plants, the landscape, and recycled materials that clearly reference the natural world. He points out the obvious, yet often ignored, connections that exist between the natural world and the cultural attitudes and practices that are projected on it. Take, for example, the previously-mentioned brown paper bag. How many of us stop to consider the source of the raw material that produced the bag? Graves asks us to think about the connections between what we consume and the impact that consumption has on the planet. But while he is deeply interested in the environment and may see the environmental art movement as a touchstone, he does not consider himself an environmental artist.

"Although I'm absolutely concerned about the environment, and I do what I can to make people aware of those things, I come at it from a different angle. I like to engage the viewer, make people think about what they are looking at."

Graves' "different angle" melds environmental art with conceptual art. If Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is an iconic environmental work, then French artist Marcel Duchamp paved the way for the conceptualists with his sculpture *Fountain*. A standard urinal basin signed by the artist with the pseudonym "R. Mutt," *Fountain* was submitted to the 1917 annual exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York. Although this was a non-juried exhibition and Duchamp was the society's director, *Fountain* was rejected.

"Duchamp was the man," Graves said. "Not only was he breaking every preconceived notion about what art can be, but it was just interesting stuff to look at. Why? It's not because it's a urinal. It's because he thought of two things: I'm going to flip this thing upside down and make you think about it as a form, not a urinal. And I'm going to say that this is sculpture and I don't care what you say—prove that it isn't. I'm calling it art; therefore it is art. End of story.

"The way I look at art, you could spit on the ground and call that performance art, and I'll go, 'Okay, yeah, let's talk about that.' The question is not if it is art, the question is 'Is it good art or bad art?'

"I'll talk about cultural attitudes and practices with my students. For example, it's easy to have power in your home, to turn on your lights and be an environmentalist at the same time, but let's back up again and look at the contradictions. Where is that energy coming from? Has anyone driven a hundred or so miles north of here [Johnson City] to Virginia or Kentucky or West Virginia? It is just devastation. Talk about how they are extracting coal—I mean, the practice of mountaintop removal is destroying ecosystems that are unique and don't exist anywhere else on the planet.

"Some of my students were surprised that, nationally, we get almost 50 percent of our energy from coal. They were flabbergasted. In their minds that is 1940s technology. I think, *How could you not know that?* One answer is obvious: Perhaps they don't want to know.

"Many people have such a curious relationship to nature. They drive through a national park or watch Discovery Channel. My nephew came to visit from Sioux City, and we went for a hike on the Appalachian Trail. It was a perfect, beautiful day. He said, 'Man, this reminds me so much of Omaha's Zoo. This is just like the zoo!'

Top: Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty, *1970. Long-term installation in Rozel Point, Box Elder County, Utah. Photo: George Steinmetz. Collection: Dia Art Foundation, New York.*

Bottom: Marcel Duchamp Fountain *(1964) [replica commissioned by Duchamp]. Photo courtesy Indiana University Art Museum: Photograph by Michael Cavanagh, Kevin Montague. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.*

"His idea of nature is like a little diagram—with this section set up like a forest. Here he is in the forest comparing the forest to some representation of the forest in a zoo, and I'm thinking, *'How odd is this?'* I didn't want to ruin the experience for him by being Uncle Professor, so I just left it at, 'Wow, that's interesting you'd say that because this is the forest.'

"I've met people in Johnson City who are in their thirties and have never been in the forest. That blows me away. They may have been to the Smokies, but their idea of the Smokies is Pigeon Forge or Gatlinburg. They might have stepped onto a trail, but in most cases they haven't left the road. They may have driven through parts—like one would in a museum—but for them it's more an amusement park attraction, not nature. Their idea is to get the picture postcard to take home to prove they were in nature!

"I drive up to the mountains to hit the trails and I see terrible litter—ravines and valleys full of trash. There are houses where you can almost see a radius around the place—like a person walks out on the porch and chucks stuff into the yard. That's just sad—to have such a poor relationship with the land. Are they going to die tomorrow because they abuse the land? No. But we do project our cultural attitudes onto the way we treat the environment. When those cultural attitudes are so tainted and so out of balance, it is bound to lead to things that are not good for nature and for us."

Graves is always thinking about our relationship to nature, and a tour of his website (www.travisgraves.com) proves it. Whether in sculpture, painting, or video, his active mind is obviously at work. And the best part is, if you are open to it, he makes you think as well. ❖

Randy Sanders is managing editor of *Now & Then*.

Balance #4. *Photo courtesy Travis Graves.*

"Boogie, Chilluns": On Saving Mountains and Crossing the Imaginary Line

Rachel Parsons

To protest the destructive practice of mountaintop removal coal-mining, a man steps across an imaginary line in an act of nonviolent civil disobedience, while his granddaughter waits in the crowd.

I am a mountain girl, born and raised in the mountains of Appalachia. Specifically, I spent my childhood on a farm in Mercer County, West Virginia. My family has never had a lot of money, though always enough to get by. I grew up playing outside instead of playing video games, and I developed a deep sense of wonder for the trees and hills.

My grandfather, or Poppy as I call him, is a remarkable man. To him, there is nothing as precious as the environment. He lived in a coal camp as a child and then struggled to make a living on his own from a very young age, working at various jobs—a printer and newspaper deliveryman among them. The mountains of Appalachia are an integral part of who he is. When I was little, I would stay with him and my nana on their farm. Poppy taught me how to plant a garden and took me on hikes. He educated me about wild Lady Slipper Orchids and Trilliums, beautiful wildflowers native to the Appalachian mountains.

My whole family is outraged by the practice of mountaintop removal coal-mining, and none of them more than Poppy. At the age of sixty-four, in 2009, he was looking forward to retiring the next year. But thoughts of a peaceful retirement on his valley farm were threatened by a coal company request for a permit to begin mining a nearby mountain, using mountaintop removal. Not only would it destroy one of the mountains guarding the small town of Matoaka, West Virginia, but it would also cause a great disturbance and many environmentally unfriendly consequences.

My mother, Wendy, had become involved in a group known as Mountain Justice and had met a man named Larry Gibson, who lives on Kayford Mountain, beside a huge mountaintop removal site. Larry encouraged my mother to fight the coal industry. She found out about a protest being held in Whitesville, West Virginia, in the county of Raleigh, but could not attend because of other commitments. My poppy wanted to go but didn't want to go alone, so I agreed to accompany him.

The date was May 23, 2009, and I was eighteen. This was to be the first protest I had ever attended. Poppy was very nervous because he'd volunteered to be one of the people to cross the "imaginary line."

The event was arranged in order to protest a nearby mountaintop removal site and specifically the slurry pond that Massey Energy Coal Company had built

Group of protesters address the crowd moments before crossing the line. Sid Moye (Poppy) is at far right. Photo by Margaret Killjoy.

directly above a local school, Marsh Fork Elementary [See *Now & Then*, "Appalachian High," Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 48.] A slurry pond is a large impoundment where wastewater from washing coal is stored. The Brushy Fork, above Marsh Fork Elementary, is the largest slurry impoundment in the western hemisphere, rising to about 954 feet at the top of its dam. It can hold 9 billion gallons of coal waste. If the impoundment were to break, the school would be covered in toxic waste immediately, and upwards of a thousand people in the valley would be covered in a matter of minutes.

The protest was to be held in Pettus, West Virginia, and was organized by Mountain Justice. The plan was for a small group of protestors to step onto the coal company's nearby property to make a statement of nonviolent civil disobedience. The Whitesville detachment of the West Virginia State Police had been notified and would be present to arrest the individuals who crossed the line onto the company's property. A larger group of us would remain behind, holding signs and preparing to pay our comrades' fines when all was said and done. We expected fairly reasonable fines and a slap on the wrist for trespassing.

Poppy and I donned our red bandanas in homage to the mining wars of the 1920s between the coal companies and miners who wanted to unionize. I was to remain behind when Poppy crossed the imaginary line, and I was armed with my camera in case things didn't go according to plan.

As protesters stated their cases over a megaphone, I held a sign saying "Save the children!" Poppy was the last to get the megaphone.

"In the words of Mother Jones," he spoke confidently, "Boogie, chilluns!" He handed the megaphone back and everyone clapped.

According to Poppy, Mother Jones would warn her comrades about thugs hired by the coal companies to terrorize the organizing miners by calling out, "The boogies are coming, chilluns!"

Poppy and the others in the small group all joined hands, and they walked calmly together down the road and across the imaginary line, while I stood watching. The police arrested Poppy and sixteen others, as planned. Some had crossed the imaginary line while others were arrested for chaining themselves to machinery on a nearby mine site on Kayford Mountain. Two more were arrested for taking a kayak out onto the Brushy Fork slurry pond to float a sign in the waste that protested mountaintop removal.

About two hours later we saw police cars leaving the station and quickly realized the people who had crossed the line were in them. On further investigation, we discovered they were being taken to Beckley, about 20 miles away, to prison, for a minor trespassing charge.

Although I was eighteen, I could not drive a car and had no real way of getting either back home to my parents or to Beckley to help Poppy. In Pettus, my cellphone did not have any service. One girl held my hand on the ride back to Whitesville, and another directed me to the telephone. I called my mother. "Poppy is in jail," I exclaimed. My mother calmed me down and said my stepdad would meet me in Beckley if I could get a ride. The girl who had directed me to the phone offered to drive me to Beckley, because she and some others were going to the prison. The group was frantically trying to pool funds to bail everyone out of jail.

When we reached the jail at 6:00 p.m., my stepfather was waiting for me. I was out of the car and over to him like lightning, desperate for the reassurance of a close family member. I had absolute confidence that he would sort things out, but I was wrong.

He and I drove around Beckley for several hours, trying to figure out how to get Poppy out of jail. He was being held on $2000 cash bond, which we needed before midnight or Poppy would have to spend the night in prison. We scraped together every penny we had and met the bond. Almost two years later the cash bond still has not been returned.

But the money is hardly the point. We made a statement. We turned a few heads. And we've been fighting mountaintop removal ever since. Thanks to the protestors, the Marsh Fork children are getting a new school away from the slurry pond. The Annenberg Foundation has donated two million dollars to help provide Marsh Fork's youth a clean and safe environment in which to learn and grow. Massey Energy, owner of the Brushy Fork impoundment and the mountaintop removal mine on Coal River Mountain, has recently agreed to pay an additional one million. It's a small step forward, but I have faith that the practice of destroying mountains for coal company greed will be abolished. ❖

Rachel Parsons is majoring in English at East Tennessee State University. When not attending classes, she lives on a farm in southern West Virginia.

Bridge Over New River Saluted by Postal Service

West Virginia's New River Gorge Bridge is depicted in a new stamp issued by the United States Postal Service. The stamp was unveiled on April 11, 2011, in a ceremony at the Canyon Rim Visitors Center at the New River Gorge National River. Congressman Nick Rahall of West Virginia joined USPS officials for the event at the center in Fayetteville.

"This little stamp is a big deal; it's a huge stamp of approval on our region, our state, and our people," said Rahall. "Our local leaders, entrepreneurs, planners, and doers have worked steadily to make sure the rest of the world knows the New River Gorge Bridge's proper place among our national pantheon of architectural accomplishments."

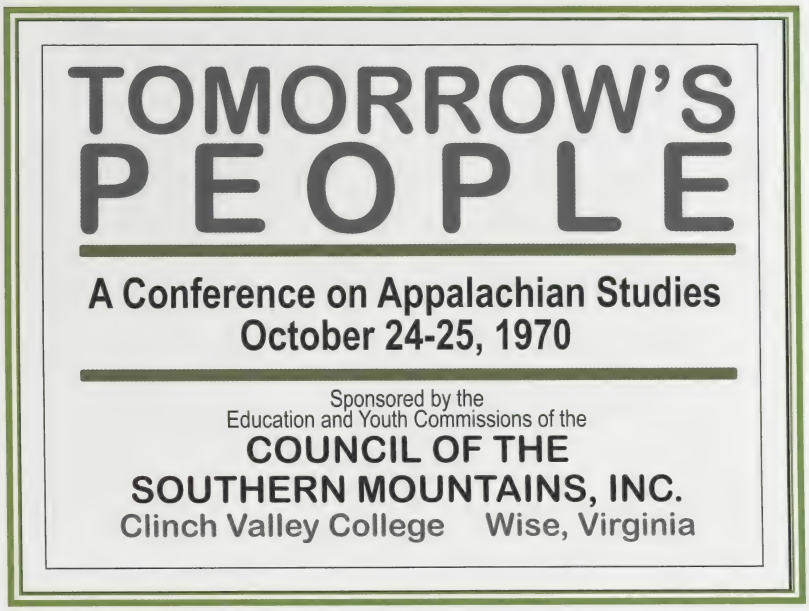
The stamp honors the third largest arch bridge in the world. With a 1700-foot span, it's the longest steel arch in the Western hemisphere. The Washington Monument could stand under it with 300 feet to spare.

The $4.95 Priority Mail stamp features a digital illustration by artist Dan Cosgrove. ❖

New River Gorge National River Superintendent Don Striker displays an enlarged image of the New River Gorge Bridge postage stamp during a ceremony at the gorge's Canyon Rim Visitors Center. Photo by Chip Ellis, The Charleston Gazette. *Used with permission.*

Remembering the First Appalachian Studies Conference, October 1970

Bill Best



When I first became a student at Berea College in the fall of 1954, I was poised to work my way through at a school famous for its work program. I knew a college education was something I needed, but having been raised on a subsistence farm, I had no money. Berea was the right place for me.

However, I was not prepared for a curriculum that placed great emphasis on removing most of the vestiges of Appalachian culture from the hearts and minds of its students. But I didn't yield easily. Some of the material presented in my classes was supposed to make me more of a generic American. I accepted some of it, but on the whole, I continued to listen to my traditional music and tall tales and challenged some of my teachers. My grade-point average suffered as a result.

I graduated in May 1959 with a B.A. degree in biology and physical education and a lot of low grades. I decided to go to graduate school for a year to get a master's degree and then go into the Army for my required service. Afterward, I started teaching in the public schools of Knox County, Tennessee.

A few months into my first year of teaching science and physical education at Pleasant Ridge Elementary, I received what I thought was an unlikely phone call from Berea. I was asked if I would like to become the director of the new Alumni Memorial Building and coordinator of social activities starting in August of 1962. Despite the fact that I would be working with many people whose opinions differed from mine, I took the job. My wife was hired to be a men's dormitory director, and for the next eleven years, we lived in three different dormitories.

After four years of organizing programs for students and staff, sometimes being a mediator between staff and students, and coaching swimming and cross country, I was selected to direct a program for 200 high-risk students in a summer residential program funded

Re-creation from pertinent conference particulars. Illustration by Randy Sanders.

by the Office of Economic Opportunity, the main part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. The program was called Project Torchlight.

Most of the students were having significant difficulty in school or had dropped out entirely, and I jumped at the chance to try some of the ideas my own professors had slammed.

I quickly realized that War on Poverty programs were not going to be popular with the local political establishments. The principal at Estill County High School forcibly escorted me out of his office, proclaiming loudly that I was "dealing in trash," his term for those students who weren't doing well in his school. A restaurant owner in Stanton threatened to poison me if I ever came into her place again. *The Clay City Times*, a newspaper in Powell County, started weekly editorial attacks on our program, along with degrading cartoons.

On the Berea campus, things weren't much better. Many professors were unaccustomed to seeing students on campus who were as active and energized as ours were. Our racial ratio didn't help either. About a quarter of the students were African American, making ours Berea's most racially integrated program.

Against those odds, we channeled the boundless energy of the students into art projects, industrial arts projects, and an excellent, full-blown production of the musical *Oklahoma*. At their own initiative, the students formed several small musical groups and started giving programs in local churches.

Among those we invited to speak to the students was a retired Jackson County, Kentucky, moonshiner who had spent many years as a janitor in Chicago. Our speakers were not ashamed of Appalachian culture. They helped students understand that they were not "trash" or "scum" and that they could use their talents and their backgrounds to become solid and productive citizens without having to renounce who they were.

Many of the young people in the first summer program went back to finish high school, while others went immediately into the job market. Most of the males and a good number of the females went into the military within two years. Four of the one hundred men were killed in Vietnam. Another was the lone survivor of his company in the battle of Hamburger Hill. One was permanently disabled by Agent Orange.

As the program entered its second year, the War on Poverty was in full retreat, and our program was funded to serve only 125 students, down from 200. However, the Office of Education had started an Upward Bound program with similar goals. We then developed an Upward Bound program which I directed, along with the second year of Project Torchlight, but with only fifty students. The two programs ran concurrently during the 1967-1968 school year, before Project Torchlight was phased out.

In Upward Bound we continued to help students build on skills they already possessed. We included a section called Appalachian Studies, in which students would write about their backgrounds and listen to speakers who talked about understanding and appreciating mountain cultures.

Right and Left Together

That second summer I was invited to speak to a group of "Appalachian Volunteers" at a training session in Barbourville, Kentucky. I didn't get very far into my presentation before I was rudely interrupted by people yelling, calling me names, and telling me I "had no right" to do what I was doing. The leader apologized for me and told the group I really didn't understand what I was saying.

But I did learn from the experience. I learned that my ideas were equally unacceptable to both right and left, and that told me I must be doing something right. During the same time the Appalachian Volunteers were shouting me down, I was being accused of sedition by the principal at Eubank High School in Pulaski County. He said he was going to have me prosecuted.

The third summer, when I was working only with Upward Bound, things calmed down some, and I was able to deal well with staff, students, and their parents. During that summer I received a visit which brought me closer to the field of Appalachian studies. Dr. Daniel Jordan, director of the Upward Bound program at Indiana State University, was visiting Berea to meet with the small group of members of the Bahai faith. The group invited me to talk with him, and he seemed sincerely interested in my focus on Appalachian studies.

I told him I had had no luck in finding a regional university where I might work on a doctorate in Appalachian studies. He then informed me he was leaving his position to become a professor at the new School of Education at the University of Massachusetts and invited me to join him in the doctoral program. Dr.

I knew what it was like to be attacked editorially by a newspaper and threatened with poisoning by a restaurant owner.

Jordan was a Jungian psychologist and a concert pianist and was particularly interested in the ways we were using Appalachian studies and the arts in our program.

I immediately went to see Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., president of Berea College, and asked to take the following academic year off to do graduate work. He said that as an administrator I didn't qualify for a sabbatical, but he thought it was important for me to work on the degree since he had plans for Appalachian studies at Berea. He said he would try to find the money to pay two-thirds of my salary.

A year later, in September of 1969, I started work in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. Shortly after classes began, Dr. Jordan, who was my advisor, called me into his office and asked if I would like to have an assistantship. Since my wife and children had remained in Berea and we were maintaining two residences, I accepted. Then I asked what my responsibilities would be. He replied, "Develop Appalachian studies."

I started to work organizing an Appalachian Studies Conference, and when the second semester rolled around, I signed up for an independent study to complete arrangements for the conference and conduct it.

I attended the annual meeting of the Council of Southern Mountains at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, only eight miles from my home on Upper Crabtree. At that conference I attended the Education Commission meeting of the council and was elected chair of the commission. I told the commission members of my plan to hold a conference, and several volunteered to assist.

As I worked during the spring of 1970 to fill in the details of a conference, I felt it would not be a good idea to hold it at Berea College, since it was on the edge of the region and the distance might be prohibitive. Clinch Valley College emerged as a possible venue, and I contacted Helen Lewis to see if she would be willing to make arrangements.

I completed my year of residency at UMASS in 1970 and returned to Berea to direct the summer Upward Bound session and finalize work for the conference at Clinch Valley in October. Bereans who planned to attend included Loyal Jones, who had resigned earlier that year as executive director of the Council of the Southern Mountains and had just become director of Berea's new Appalachian Center. Others who were involved were Dr. Richard Drake, chair of Berea's history department, who had created an Appalachian history course there in the late 1950s, and Dr. John Crowden, chair of the sociology department.

The Conference Happens

As people registered, I was pleased to see college professors, graduate students, undergraduate students, community organizers, community activists, Community Action program staff, National Education Association staff, and representatives from religious groups. Over 120 people registered for the conference, even though there was no money to help underwrite expenses.

Strangely, a large group of people refused to register or even reveal their names. They met in small groups, played musical instruments, and otherwise "related" to one another but not to the other conference attendees.

My year at UMASS left me accustomed to disruptions, and I often heard on the radio early in the morning that there would be a "free university" under tents on campus as students held "teach-ins" and avoided regularly scheduled classes. And I had already had the experience of being shouted down by "Appalachian Volunteers" and forcibly shoved out of principals' offices. I knew what it was like to be attacked editorially by a newspaper and threatened with poisoning by a restaurant owner.

But I wasn't prepared for what happened the second day of the conference. The "young folks," as

George Brosi called them (though many appeared older than I), let me know why they had arrived at the conference when they started yelling "power to the people" and demanding that all conference activities cease.

Not wishing to bring in the local or Virginia police, I summoned members of the Education Commission, and we agreed to end the conference. Despite the disruption, getting such a large group of people together who shared an interest and a vision for Appalachian studies was an accomplishment. I was confident that many of the people I had met would be going back to their homes and communities to bring Appalachian studies into being there.

We disbanded the Education Commission and agreed to work independently for the next few years since the Council of the Southern Mountains itself seemed to be in a state of freefall.

As registered participants said their goodbyes, the "young folks" seemed to be emboldened by what had happened, since the conference had been so easily "liberated" and terminated. As they talked in groups about what their next regional challenges might be, I started asking questions.

"I know there must be reasons why you refuse to identify yourselves, but would you at least be willing to tell me how you would characterize yourselves?" I asked. "We're refugees from affluence," a young man answered. Then they started telling me why natives were unqualified to lead a movement in Appalachian studies and why it should be done by people such as they. I was "part of the problem," they contended, saying nothing good could happen as long as natives were trying to develop programs on their own.

I had heard similar assertions in some of my courses at Berea in the late 1950s. When I asked a music professor why we never studied any of our own musical traditions, he said, "I'll have all of you know that I gave up an excellent career in industrial chemistry in order to bring culture to mountain people."

Planned and organized by natives and outlanders alike, today's Appalachian Studies conferences prove that we have indeed come a long way in shaping the perceptions and realities of the region. ❖

Bill Best is a retired Berea College physical education professor and director of the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center.

Nitro, WV, to Pikeville, KY: The Morning After my Fiftieth High School Reunion, June, 2010

Don Johnson

Taking the on-ramp up, I glide through
the second story of the house my father
sold, bought back, and moved both times the state
widened the road to Poca. When the land ran out,
it sat empty, waiting for the Interstate
to stick build it in memory, where tap water
smells like creosote and eggs, and each breath
blisters my lungs when I labor up
low ridges following my dog after quail.

Downriver, monumental cooling towers
cloak this "Magic Valley" in clouds I climb
out of at Cross Lanes where greyhounds run
each night in circles. At South Charleston
the bridge across the galvanized Kanawha
disappears in mist. It's 1956 again.
Girders and trusses dissolve, and I'm buoyed
for a moment on the stench of rotting carp
necklaced by yellowjackets.

I remember Coal River flowing clear
and strain to glimpse its shoaling as I cross
near Sproul, where bridge rails and sycamores
obscure the river's surface. The Little Coal,
the Little Coal, the Little Coal, also blind,
resigned, given the loaded gondolas pouring
down these mountains, to whispering
its own name over and over. Crossing
Big Ugly Creek I wonder how anything
in this region could not be literal.

But when I find myself heading north
on WV 65 while traveling US 119 south,
I see, a half mile over on my right, a gray
town, a white sign on a faded
warehouse, that reads in black block letters:
CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN DREAMS.

and just across the border in Kentucky
I stop to watch the children on the village
Soccer fields at Belfry, playing their hearts out.

Don Johnson is professor of English and poet in residence at ETSU. He has published three volumes of poetry, the most recent of which is *Here and Gone: New and Selected Poems* (Louisiana Literature Press).

The Environmental Health of Appalachia and the Role of the Environmental Health Program at ETSU

Phillip Scheuerman

Those of us who live in Appalachia are blessed with living in an area of stunning environmental beauty and diversity. Some of the most unique ecosystems in the world exist here. Almost any type of outdoor activity one can imagine can be enjoyed in Appalachia. Amateur and professional naturalists can study a rich variety of flora and fauna. Forests and waterways provide plenty of places to hunt and fish. Hikers have many trails to enjoy, highlighted by one of the most famous routes in the world, the Appalachian Trail. Skiers and snowboarders can enjoy well-maintained commercial ski resorts.

But this unrivaled beauty and abundance of activities bring large numbers of tourists every year and a rapid immigration of people. Although terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are rich and abundant in Appalachia, they are extremely fragile and easily damaged by such a large influx of visitors and new residents.

Most of us quickly recognize the visible outcomes of damaged ecosystems: declining forests, reduced water quality, fish kills, algal blooms, reduced air quality, and erosion of soil. What many people miss is the link between environmental degradation, human health, and quality of life. Increased air pollution contributes to allergies, asthma, cancer, and increased spread of respiratory diseases. Reduced water quality contributes to gastrointestinal diseases, increased costs to treat water for potable uses, and loss of water for crops and livestock.

Environmental issues in Appalachia are significant and varied. Air pollution in Appalachia is caused by mining, traffic, agriculture, rapid urbanization, and pollutants transported from outside the region. For example, the Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia region has been listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an "ozone non-attainment region," meaning that the standard for ground-level ozone was not met, thus significantly increasing health risks. Many streams in Appalachia have been listed by the EPA as not meeting water quality criteria for pathogens, nutrients, and sediment, thus increasing the exposure risk to people using that water for agriculture, recreation, and consumption. Some areas of Appalachia have been cited as exceeding the national average for cancer, heart disease, and other chronic diseases. The role of environmental degradation and exposure to pollutants

Tourists on the Rough Ridge Trail, Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina. Photo by Charlie Warden.

in causing these diseases is an area of significant research interest. The risks to people from these environmental issues include potential increased infectious disease, cancer, and asthma.

The discipline of environmental health addresses how the environment affects the quality of life and health of individuals and populations. Research and practice of environmental health focus on identifying sources of pollution, linking these sources to human health outcomes, and identifying and implementing ways to reduce these exposures in the home, workplace, and public areas.

One of the keystone moments in the history of environmental health studies was English physician Dr. John Snow's discovery in 1854 that water could transmit diseases such as cholera. Early advances in environmental health were mainly achieved in what we generally term as sanitation. This included water quality and food quality. As the field grew, environmental health scientists recognized the role of air pollution, workplace exposures, and public venue exposures. Because of the large and diverse list of potential environmental issues that affect human health, it is critical that people working on these issues have training in environmental health.

Rural environmental health is focused on the same issues but with some important and unique characteristics. Typically rural populations are smaller and more spread out. This means that many of the technologies used to reduce environmental exposures in more densely populated urban areas are not practical. Water treatment, wastewater treatment, food storage, and workplace exposures require technologies that work at a small scale with lower costs.

The need for practitioners and researchers trained in environmental health is large. Environmental health research and education have been long-standing traditions at East Tennessee State University. The environmental health program was established as a department in 1965 and was a natural transition from the Public Health Sanitarian School, which began in 1957. ETSU's became the first nationally accredited program in 1969, and in August 1971 it awarded the first master of science in environmental health degrees to twenty-one students. In 1977 it became the nation's first accredited graduate environmental health program. Currently ETSU offers the bachelor of science and master of science in environmental health, the master of public health, and a Ph.D. in environmental health sciences.

Faculty in the department have diverse backgrounds and interests. Faculty expertise, research, and training include solid wastes, indoor air pollution, water quality, sustainable environments, community activism, and community involvement. The curriculum is designed to give students a broad background in the basic sciences and the important environmental health disciplines. Students learn about occupational health, sanitation, air quality, water quality, food quality, and environmental health program administration. All undergraduate students and MPH students must complete a semester-long internship or cooperative education experience working for an industry, government agency, or community organization. Over 90 percent of graduates land jobs in the field or go on for additional education. Doctoral and MSEH graduate students complete a dissertation, thesis, or research project, many of which focus on environmental issues in Appalachia. Students from every state in the U.S. and more than fifty countries have earned degrees in environmental health from ETSU.

The Environmental Health Sciences Laboratory provides a core facility for faculty and students to conduct research and provide routine analysis of environmental samples for the public, industry, and local municipalities. Current research being conducted by faculty and students includes indoor air quality studies, fate and toxicity of nanoparticles in landfills, and surface water quality studies.

The program at ETSU provides trained professionals and research results necessary to solve the large number of environmental health problems in Appalachia. An important focus of the College of Public Health in which the Department of Environmental Health resides is the participation of faculty and students in community service. They work with various entities including migrant workers, small communities, watershed groups, and air pollution action partnerships to educate the public about environmental concerns and help improve the quality of life in Appalachia. ❖

Phillip Scheuerman is chair of environmental health and director of the Environmental Health Sciences Laboratory at ETSU. He earned his Ph.D. in environmental engineering sciences from the University of Florida. His research focuses on the impact of water quality on human health.

Life Without Water

Tamara Baxter

The 1955 Greeneville Co-Op calendar hangs on the kitchen wall above the sink where my father studies the crop signs in the slant light of the window. A dirty thumbprint marks the signs for planting, marks the warnings of sporadic rain that might ruin the hay, should there be enough rain to make the hay. His frustration soils the sign of the heart in June when weeds must be pulled from the corn before it gets too high to work, if there should be corn this year. His dirty fingers mark a time in July when the drought will surely come. According to the calendar, the drought will linger through most of August.

My father's fingerprints on the calendar prophesy life without water for most of the summer. We will be hauling water from the spring in the milk cans. We will be rinsing the supper dishes in one hot cup of water dribbled over each plate and cup and knife and fork, water that must be dipped from the spring, collected in milk cans, lifted, hauled by truck, then lifted down, carried to the kitchen, and measured sparingly. There will be no ropes of wild water rung from my mother's dishrags above the sink, or flung in soapy arches from the back door. There will be no white sheets hung on the clothes lines two or three days of the week. We will wash our faces and hands with a wet rag, or go to the river and bathe.

By mid-July the leaves have gone to parchment. The bony fingers of the sycamore tree point downward. The yellow jackets have taken the orchard, sucking the fruits that have died on the stem and fallen like the weight of grief. Ghost boogers spiral along the dirt road. In the fields, corn is drying on the stalks. My mother carries the last of the cistern water and dribbles it around the green beans and tomato plants. The cows bawl in the dry pasture. My brother and I drive them to the river where there is still shade and water. In this year of the drought, I am five years old and my brother is seven. This drought marks our second summer of life without water.

When the cistern goes dry in late July, my father screeches open the heavy cistern lid, round and rusted. The deep chasm of dry mortared walls smells of dungeon. My father goes down on a long ladder with a shovel and a bucket clanging on his belt. He cleans the bottom of the cistern out while there is still time before the rains come back, if the rain should come at all. From below the earth, shovel and bucket echo my father's hard work. He brings the bucket up again and again, filled

Corn withering in the field. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Photo by Russell Lee.

with crumbling leaves, packed brown dirt, mummified worms, a dead snake drowned and now gone to leather, the ivory bones of rodents, and birds' feathers washed from the tin roof. Bucket after bucket of drought and dust mounds like a communal grave outside the empty cistern. My father digs his way out, alive, and emerges blinded by the mid-morning sun.

Beside the kitchen window, he studies the calendar like a Bible. Perhaps later in August we will once again have water at the pump, and from the dipper, the iron taste of cistern water. My father leaves a fingerprint of hope for mid-August on a leaf of calendar. The calendar is printed on a simple white background with red-lettered days. In the fine print are the weather warnings for the weeks and weeks to come. Hot. Hazy. Dry.

The tree's roots look like holy arms, muscled and strong, holding forth a pan of water.

But my father has believed the calendar's foretelling, and he has saved the tobacco crop by early planting in the river bottom fields. The irrigation pumps run daily, a mist of gasoline vapor rises through the tree line, the silver underbellies of the leaves flash and sparkle. The green tobacco grows taller and stronger. These irrigated tobacco fields, these river-watered trees are the only thing green on our little spot of earth. There isn't a blade alive except the weeds growing along the margin of the river. The cows have eaten all the corn my father had put back for next year's planting, and most of the grain, too. They have choked down the last of the winter's hay.

The cows linger in the shade and wade along the river's edge during this hot summer. My brother and I switch them away from the river in the late afternoon and run them to the barn for milking. Their thin streams of milk dribble in the buckets. We fill only two cans now, and mother drops trays of ice in the milk to preserve it until the milk man comes in the morning.

In early August, the Pet Milk man tells my father the milk fat content is down. Now, there is a drought of milk. The milk check will dwindle, and without vegetables to sell, we must live on the tobacco crop. My father will take a loan from the bank and pay it back when the tobacco is sold. My mother says there may not be much for Christmas this year. My brother and I should not be dreaming about fancy talking dolls and toy trains. We will have clothes for Christmas, if anything.

My brother and I ride the back of my father's Ford truck to the big spring near the river. We have three empty milk cans on the truck bed and buckets for dipping. The spring water runs from a small river cave straddled by the roots of a gigantic sassafras. The tree's roots look like holy arms, muscled and strong, holding forth a pan of water. My brother rolls his pants legs and wades into the water, but the pool rises above his waist. He blubbers against the sudden chill. My father tells him to come get the bucket and help fill the milk cans. My brother ducks under the clear water and emerges with a water snake that coils his arm like a bed spring. He laughs and tells me I will like drinking snake water. He waves the writhing snake before my face and then unwinds it back into the water. At supper, my mother asks why I have suddenly taken a liking to buttermilk.

My mother dribbles water from the spring over a few of the garden plants so we will not perish of hunger, even though we seem to perish of thirst. She has cut the garden plot to a twelve-by-twelve spot of earth. She has planted lettuce and green onions in the shade of the smokehouse in hopes that this food will not scorch. The thermometer on the back porch reads 103 degrees. The tin roof pops like gunshot. The sky waves in the milky heat.

My father says he will have a well dug. He will send for the man from Cedar Creek who can witch a well site with the fork of a peach limb. We will be done relying on cistern water that is full of bird shit washed off the house roof and tiny worms wiggling in the dipper. We will be done hauling daily water to pigs and chickens. My father draws some big Xs across the hateful days in mid-August. The river has gone so low the cows stumble over the rocks to find a puddle for drinking. My father moves the irrigation pumps farther into the river on piled up islands of river rock. The spring is flowing, though.

My mother surveys the cracked earth around the back porch. Her lovely lawns have turned to dust. She could just cry, she says. Then she says what is that awful sound? We look toward Mr. John's house, our nearest neighbor, and his chicken house is on fire. The

flames sweep so high and hot we hear the screaming fire and screaming chickens. We go with buckets to help, but Mr. John's cistern is dry, too, and there is nary a drop to throw on the flame. There are one hundred White Leghorns in Mr. John's big chicken house. Some of them fly out between the burning planks, their wings on fire. They flutter around the ground and then drop, still burning. And some of them quirt straight up like popcorn before they catch fire, then fall back into the flames. The nitrogen-rich chicken manure smells like fertilizer in the clouds of hot air. Mr. John looks so old in the coming dark, sobbing with an empty bucket in his hand.

My mother says she will never cry over a dry lawn again. My father guards the burning end of his cigarette and catches the ash in his palm. He says the fire must have been an electrical short. Mr. John had electric lights in his chicken house. My mother says the fire was spontaneous combustion. It is so dry and hot, so hard to breathe, only something bad like this could happen in such weather.

The calendar predicts rain by late August. Rain in torrents. We watch the sky for the second coming, which must be water since we have had fire. Finally, a thick ring grows around the moon, and in the day, the soft cirrus clouds disappear and the sky clabbers thick and dark. Father runs his finger across the third week of August as if to smudge its memory out of existence. Rain, he says, is coming. So much rain we'll be able to wring quarts of water out of the air with our bare hands.

In late August, the cows raise their ears and sniff the air, their eyes focused and attentive. As father has foretold, the rains fall torrentially. The pasture greens up in three or four days. The air smells of ozone. My father turns the leaf to September a week early and reads the forecast that promises a drop in temperature and more rain. He will cut the dead cornstalks for silage sometime later in the fall. Mother says she will plant a late garden of turnip greens and cabbage if she can find someone with plants.

In mid-September my mother puts out a washing that must be hung indoors on strings across the kitchen. She sets a row of buckets on the back steps to catch the rain for more washing. She claims that a woman's life is somehow connected to water. Rainwater. Cistern water. Spring water. Water, muddy or clear. A woman cannot escape water. She is born of it. Birth water, hot running down a woman's legs. Dishwater. Washing machine water. Coffee-boiling water. Baptismal water. Tears. Sometimes God sends a drought, and sometimes He sends too much water, like worries. The two go together somehow, she says.

On a late September afternoon, my mother washes me in the kitchen sink in front of all the field hands who are eating supper with my father and my brother after cutting the tobacco. The field dust clings to their sweaty faces, their sweaty hats still on their heads. Their dirty hands that can never be washed clean lift biscuits to their mouths. Reaching for the bowls and passing them, their arms knit a blessing across the supper table. They eat silently, the clank of forks on plates, the prayer in the ritual of their eating. Their tired eyes focus on the bounty before them, and mother lifts me washed clean in late summer rain, wrapped in a clean towel from the clothes line. ❖

Tamara Baxter won the Morehead State University and Jesse Stuart Foundation's inaugural Fiction Prize for her collection of short fiction, *Rock Big and Sing Loud*, published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation. She teaches creative writing at Northeast State Community College in Blountville, Tennessee, and is an editor of the literary magazine *Echoes & Images*.

Appaloosa Landscape

Scott Owens

In this slow precipitation
of melting snow, the ground
is always wet and putting itself
together like pieces of a puzzle,
here a spot a boot tread,
here another where the sun
shone a bit longer.

A stubborn tuft of grass
shakes off what would deny it
room to grow. One world
tumbles down, another rises.

Scott Owens is editor of *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, vice president of the Poetry Council of North Carolina, and the author of six poetry collections. He holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and currently teaches at Catawba Valley Community College.

Knoxville-Born Actress Dale Dickey Relishes Characters Who Move in Life's Darker Edges

Brad Lifford

Dale Dickey knows something about maintaining pride in oneself no matter the circumstances, no matter the external perceptions. She feels it on a personal level and through the characters she inhabits in movies and TV and on the stage—even if those characters happen to be methamphetamine manufacturers, addicts, or prostitutes. Or if she happens to be portraying a woman in the hardscrabble Ozarks who is willing to put a beating on a teenage girl trying to find her father.

That latter role, in the independent film *Winter's Bone*, has garnered more praise than ever for this Knoxville, Tennessee-born actress. And Dickey, well-known for brutally real characters, does wince a bit when watching parts of *Winter's Bone*: "I'll admit there is a scene that I have a hard time watching now." No one else who saw *Winter's Bone* has likely said that about Dale Dickey, even if she does brandish a chainsaw near the end of the film.

Winter's Bone chronicles the dark odyssey of a teenage girl trying to fathom what has happened to her meth-manufacturing father, dead or alive, as she and the two young siblings she is raising stand to lose the family home if she does not. She tromps through the Ozarks, knocking on doors of relatives and continually coming up against unfriendly resistance. No one matches the barbed reception afforded her by Merab, a matriarch and gatekeeper of the tightly-knit, meth-cooking clan of the region. Merab makes it clear to Ree, played by Jennifer Lawrence, that she considers no measure too extreme if it brings her quest to a halt.

Merab may seem at first to be the hardest part of this bone-hard movie, but Dickey infuses the character with such a briny intelligence, fearsomeness, and stony compassion that she is impossible to ignore.

"The character of Merab is just something I understood," Dickey says. "Whether from my association with friends and family in the rural parts of East Tennessee, or just reading and movies . . . . Her position was clear: protecting her land and family. And Ree proved a problem, so it needed to be fixed.

"I just hope these cycles do have a chance to get

FILM

Merab (Dale Dickey) walking in the snow. Photo courtesy Roadside Attractions.

broken and change as generations move on. The world would be a better place if all that pride were put aside."

The surrender of pride that Dickey speaks of is a world away from her sense of pride in work and her heritage, which is thoroughly Appalachian. She had primarily been known as Patty the Daytime Hooker in the comedy series "My Name Is Earl," but she gained a new measure of notice when she earned best female supporting actor honors in the Spirit Awards, the Oscars of the indie world.

Dickey also portrayed a meth-addled woman in the brilliant TV series "Breaking Bad." Should a similar role come her way again, she won't be surprised.

"I have an angular character face which casting folks see often as rough, downtrodden characters," Dickey says. "I have made a career of playing prostitutes, prisoners, drug addicts, homeless people, barmaids, and mountain women. I'm proud to play them all with some sense of dignity and grace, no matter how horrendous their circumstances."

Dickey did not grow up a mountain woman, but she has a strong sense of the mountains within her, even though acting first made her a New York City transplant and now Los Angeles resident. She grew up in the heart of Knoxville's Bearden community, an area notable for its shopping. But Dickey wasn't taken by shopping. From an early age, she knew what she wanted to be.

"My three main influences growing up in East Tennessee were my exposure to the mountains and the outdoors, exposure to various cultural events, and my experiences with the University of Tennessee theatre department while as a kid as well as in college," Dickey says. She speaks fondly of being outdoors, of a farm and woods that were adjacent to her childhood home, of trips to the beach with her parents. But it was performance art that captured her most. "My grandparents took us to the theatre, movies, music and dance concerts from when I was a little girl through high school. I had a lot of exposure to arts my whole life, and I began acting as a child of nine with the UT theatre department. Over the years, I was doing three or four plays a year there, before I was an actual student."

Dickey did later become a theatre student at UT and remembers the experience in rich detail and with immense gratitude. While casting agents typically show bias in favor of certain "pedigreed" schools, she fiercely defends her experience with the Clarence Brown Theatre Company. She made a triumphant return to Clarence Brown a couple of years ago to play Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and still visits family in Knoxville twice a year.

"I was very lucky and most grateful for the amount of experience I received," Dickey says. "The Clarence Brown Company was a professional LORT [League of Resident Theatres] theatre company in residence since the mid-'70s, so students had the chance to work with professional actors from New York and Los Angeles throughout their schooling.

"A big lesson I learned from an acting teacher in New York was to be proud of my training. New York, where I began, can be pretty brutal about finding agent representation – particularly if one doesn't come from a 'league' school or conservatory. But I worked on both sides of the table for a while, and my teacher was right: The kids coming out of UT were every bit, if not more, talented than the 'league' graduates, although the road would be a bit harder for them. I saw many talented kids from other schools, but many of them trained over-technically, leaving them with a robotic style and less heart and soul."

It's hard to imagine anyone applying that description to Dale Dickey. There is a richness and genuineness to all her performances. *Winter's Bone* director Debra Granik, a New Yorker, has marveled at how Dickey so quickly and easily moved among the local Missourians who opened their homes and lives to allow incredible access to the film crew.

"The people who lived there were amazing, and I had some exposure to rural areas growing up that reminded me of that place," Dickey said. "I think when you're asked to play a character like Merab, even someone who is supposed to be a villain, you find something positive to focus on. I'm sure there will be more such gritty roles down the line." ❖

Brad Lifford is film editor for *Now & Then*.

The Jake Walk Blues from a Green Bottle

Wayne Winkler

In May of 1930, the Chattanooga-based Allen Brothers cut a record for the Victor Recording Company that documented an epidemic spreading across much of the United States. Accompanied by kazoo, guitar, and mandolin, Lee and Austin Allen sang:

I can't eat,
I can't talk,
Drinkin' mean jake, Lord,
I can't walk.

"Jake Walk Blues" sold well for Depression-era country blues and was the first of many songs describing a unique paralysis affecting drinkers of Jamaica ginger, a patent medicine with a high alcohol content (70 to 80 percent). Popular during Prohibition, the two-ounce green bottles sold for thirty-five cents and provided more alcohol than two average mixed drinks.

Jake Walk Blues. Photo montage courtesy Wayne Winkler.

Jamaica ginger had been available since the middle of the nineteenth century. Powdered extract of ginger was dissolved in a solution of alcohol and sold as a remedy for a variety of ailments, including catarrh, flatulence, and menstrual problems. With the advent of Prohibition in 1920, regulators demanded that Jamaica ginger contain a minimum requirement of ginger solids per cubic centimeter to discourage recreational use. As a result, "jake" became very bitter and difficult to drink.

Jake drinkers occupied a unique rung on the social ladder. Urban drinkers had access to bootleg liquor, either illegally imported or homemade. Rural drinkers often had access to moonshine. In small towns, poor people—often single men seeking work—turned to highly alcoholic patent medicines as an alternative to such skid-row libations as paint thinner or Sterno.

Harry Gross and Max Reisman were brothers-in-law, amateur chemists, and bootleggers. Looking for

NOTES

an adulterant that would make their Jamaica ginger pass inspections and still be palatable, they hit upon tri-o-tolyl phosphate (also known as tri-ortho cresyl phosphate or TOCP). TOCP was a plasticizer thought to be non-toxic. What possible harm could come to people drinking a plasticizer? As it turned out, a lot. Researchers later determined that TOCP was a neurotoxin that damaged nerve cells in the spinal cord.

Soon after Gross and Reisman's TOCP-contaminated jake hit the market in 1930, jake drinkers across the country began to lose the use of their hands and feet. Walking became problematic for many; they had no control of the muscles that kept their toes pointed upward, and they adopted a gait which became known as the "jake walk." They raised their feet high, and their toes hit the pavement before their heels, creating a unique "tap-click" rhythm.

The paralysis quickly attracted notice. By February of 1930 the first records of the affliction came from Oklahoma City. Doctors thought the first patient they saw had polio, the most common cause of sudden paralysis. However, four more patients with identical symptoms arrived at the hospital on the same day. Within a few days, reports of paralysis began coming in from other parts of the country.

Johnson City, Tennessee, was particularly hard hit. One local victim of jake leg wrote to the Surgeon General that on any given day one could see on the streets of Johnson City "three or four hundred people in the same condition that I am in." Will Kite and his daughter operated a store in Johnson City that sold jake. They denied that the product they sold (and consumed themselves) was causing paralysis, noting that each bottle bore an official government label. The Kites continued to operate the store for some time, although their jake-induced paralysis forced them to crawl on their hands and knees to wait on customers.

Dr. John Morgan, a professor at the City University of New York, describes himself as a "pharmaco-ethnomusicologist." He was profiled in the September 15, 2003, issue of *The New Yorker* and described seeing a victim of jake leg in his childhood home of Ohio. Morgan collected a number of songs about jake leg and compiled them into a compact disc.

Jake Leg Blues was released on the Jass Records label in 1994. In addition to the Allen Brothers' tune quoted above, the collection features a number of songs referring to the affliction. The songs are in the country and blues genres, styles that appealed to the socio-economic groups most likely to be familiar with the affliction. Lemuel Turner's slide guitar instrumental "Jake Bottle Blues" was recorded before the poisoned jake hit the market and apparently was composed to express the type of blues that would drive someone to drink Jamaica ginger in the first place. The Allen Brothers' jaunty kazoo-driven "Jake Walk Blues" was copied and modified by Corbin, Kentucky's Asa Martin, while Dave McCarn of Gaston County, North Carolina, wrote "Bay Rum Blues" about a "legal" intoxicant that many turned to when Jamaica ginger proved to be poisonous. The Ray Brothers' "Jake Leg Wobble" is a guitar and fiddle piece that approximates the gait of the jake drinker.

Byrd Moore's "Jake Legs Blues" is a blue yodel in the Jimmie Rodgers vein, while Willie Lofton's "Jake Leg Blues" echoes Tommy Johnson. Johnson, himself a hard-core alcoholic who was well acquainted with intoxicants like Sterno, shoe polish, and jake, recorded "Alcohol and Jake Blues" in March of 1930. He never recorded another song, suffering the alcoholic delusion that he had signed away the right to ever record music again. At the same recording session that produced "Alcohol and Jake Blues," Ishmam Bracey recorded "Jake Liquor Blues." Bracey, like the other black performers of jake songs, noted that impotence was another side effect.

You get numb in front of your body
You can't carry any lovin' on…
Aunt Jane, she came runnin' and screamin',
Tellin' everybody in the neighborhood,
'That man of mine got the limber trouble,
And his lovin' can't do me any good.'

In 1976, Dr. Morgan interviewed a jake victim who had lived in a boarding house in Elizabethton, Tennessee. Gwin Davis had been a millworker who bought jake at a roadside stand that also offered ice cream, sandwiches, and moonshine. He and nearly all the young men who lived at his boarding house were afflicted at the same time and at first thought it was funny. "We didn't know we was going to get to where we couldn't walk at all," Davis said. Morgan asked Davis if he'd ever thought of getting married, and Davis looked at his feet and cried.

In 1930 there were no government agencies to remove Jamaica ginger from the market. Word of mouth spread quickly that jake was poisonous, although no one knew the nature or source of the poison. One jake victim from Elizabethton recalled that people thought the German owners of the local Bemberg mill had poisoned the jake to "soften up" Americans for another world war. Investigators from the federal Hygiene Laboratory (soon to become the National Institutes of Health) had a difficult time finding samples of contaminated jake. Storekeepers took jake off the shelves, consumers threw out their supplies, and often researchers had to recover bottles from cesspools or outhouse pits. Analysts eventually discovered TCOP in the jake samples, but up until then they had not considered plasticizer to be toxic.

The trail eventually led to Harry Gross and Max Reisman, the Boston brothers-in-law who came up with the bright idea of adding TCOP to Jamaica ginger. To be fair, if government investigators hadn't thought TCOP to be toxic, who could expect a couple of bootleggers to know better? However, Gross and Reisman continued to ship the poisonous jake even after learning that their product was suspected of causing severe damage to its consumers. Gross wound up doing two years in prison; Reisman was never jailed.

Some felt the true blame lay with the Prohibition laws that forced many low-income people, for whom bootlegged liquor was a prohibitively expensive luxury, to seek out dangerous alternatives. As the Mississippi Sheiks sang in their 1930 "Jake Leg Blues,"

> *You thought the lively man would die*
> *When you made the country dry,*
> *When you made it so that he could not get another drop of rye.*

The jake leg epidemic ended rather quickly, although not quickly enough for the thousands of people who suffered the after-effects for the remainder of their lives. Its impact, however, can be measured by the sheer number of songs collected by Dr. Morgan, the "pharmaco-ethnomusicologist." Morgan told *The New Yorker* that no other incident inspired as much music as the jake leg epidemic. Disasters might inspire a song or two, but as Morgan said, "There is nothing to equal the jake walk." ❖

Wayne Winkler is director of public radio station WETS-FM on the campus of East Tennessee State University and is the music editor for *Now & Then*.

MUSIC IN BRIEF

Wayne Winkler

Various Artists
The Bristol Sessions: The Big Bang of Country Music
Bear Family Records

Country music historian Nolan Porterfield coined the term "the big bang of country music" to describe Ralph Peer's recording sessions in Bristol, Tennessee, in the summer of 1927. Another music historian, Bill Malone, described the Bristol Sessions as "one of country music's most seminal events." Johnny Cash went even further, saying, "These recordings in Bristol in 1927 are the single most important event in the history of country music."

Bear Family Records of Hamburg, Germany—producer of many first-rate collections of classic American country music—has issued a compilation that reflects the significance of the Bristol Sessions. The project was initiated and produced by Dr. Ted Olson of East Tennessee State University's Department of Appalachian Studies. He has extensively researched and written about the sessions. Olson and Tony Russell wrote the lavishly-illustrated 120-page book that accompanies the five-CD set.

The Bristol Sessions covers not only the ten days of recording in July and August of 1927 but also Peer's return visit to Bristol in the fall of 1928. The book details each day of the sessions, down to the time of day when each act was recorded. Lyrics have been transcribed by Phil Wells—a difficult task owing to the lack of sheet music for most of the songs and the sometimes hard-to-decipher accents of the singers.

Peer's work in Bristol is best remembered for being the first recordings by both Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family. But Peer recorded many other acts during his two forays into Bristol, and many of them sold respectable numbers of records for the Victor Company. One of the main reasons Peer came to Bristol in the first place was the town's proximity to Ernest "Pop" Stoneman and the Stoneman Family of Galax, Virginia. Peer had recorded them many times before. Pop Stoneman cut several sides during both the 1927 and 1928 sessions, working with his family band, with the Dixie Mountaineers, with Miss Irma Frost and Uncle Eck Dunford, and with his own pseudonymous band, the Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers. Another studio veteran was Henry Whittier of Fries, Virginia, with over sixty recordings to his credit at the time of the 1927 sessions.

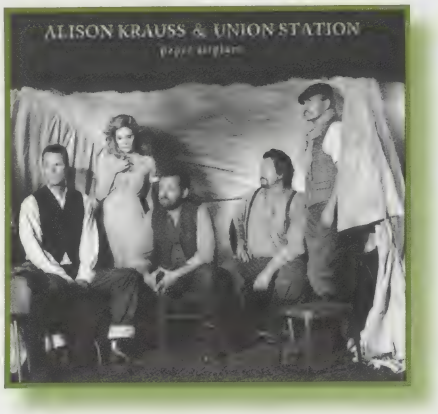
The wonderful book accompanying the CDs documents the others who journeyed to Bristol to record their songs for posterity. The mysterious harmonica

soloist El Watson was the only African American at the 1927 sessions. In addition to his own two numbers, Watson played with the Johnson Brothers, an act from Boone, North Carolina, that had also previously recorded for Peer. This marks yet another historical first for the Bristol Sessions: the first integrated country music recordings. An African American duo from Scott County, Virginia, Steven Tarter and Harry Gay, recorded at the 1928 sessions.

Some of the performers, like the Carter Family, lived near Bristol or, like Jimmie Rodgers, were working nearby when they heard about the sessions. Others traveled long distances. The Shelor Family string band drove a truck from Patrick County, Virginia, to perform, while the Stamps Quartet journeyed from Chattanooga. Banjo virtuoso B. F. Shelton came from Corbin, Kentucky, as did Ernest Phipps and his Holiness Quartet. Blind Alfred Reed, along with Fred Pendleton and Clyde Meadows and the West Virginia Coon Hunters, came to Bristol from West Virginia. Some of the performers became well-known, at least to country music aficionados; others were forgotten. But all seemed to sense that something important was happening in Bristol.

The recordings themselves have been painstakingly re-mastered, and the results are impressive. Ralph Peer used state-of-the-art equipment for these sessions, including the newly-invented Western Electric microphone. However, the original 78 rpm discs, played on primitive Victrolas and gramophones with steel needles, never sounded as good as these CDs. The harmonies of the Carter Family, the virtuosity of musicians like B.F. Shelton and the duo of J. P. Nestor and Norman Edmonds, and the classic country humor of Pop Stoneman and Eck Dunford are all presented with pristine clarity and fidelity.

The Bristol Sessions is a big box and will take up a large space on the collector's shelf. That is only fitting, as the sessions themselves occupy a large space in the musical history of America. We can all be grateful to Bear Family Records and everyone involved in producing this marvelous collection documenting an important part of our cultural heritage. ❖



Alison Krauss and Union Station
Paper Airplane
Rounder Records

After winning six Grammy awards in 2008 for *Raising Sand*, her collaboration with former Led Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant, Alison Krauss has reunited with her longtime band Union Station for her fourteenth album. The last offering from Krauss and her band was the 2004 release, the Grammy-winning *Lonely Runs Both Ways*. On *Paper Airplane*, Krauss continues to add her clear, soaring vocals to the work of some of America's finest songwriters, including Jackson Browne, Lori McKenna, and Tim O'Brien. Two longtime sources for Alison Krauss material, Robert Lee Castleman and Sidney Cox, are represented, with the title cut and "Bonita and Bill Butler," respectively. Peter Rowan contributed "Dust Bowl Children," with a lead vocal by Dan Tyminski. The songs speak of trying times, of working your way through rough spots. As Krauss told *Billboard* magazine, "It was hard singing a lot of these songs. But if I'm not truthful, then I'm wasting everybody's time and my own." *Paper Airplane* is most definitely not a waste of her time or ours. ❖

Sierra Hull
Daybreak
Rounder Records

At nineteen, Sierra Hull already has a truly impressive résumé. Her father bought her first mandolin when she was seven. The mandolin prodigy released her first album, the instrumental *Angel Mountain*, when she was ten. When Sierra was eleven, Alison Krauss invited the Byrdstown, Tennessee, native to join her onstage at the Grand Ole Opry. An offer from Rounder Records soon followed, and in 2008 Hull released *Secrets*, produced by Ron Block, a member of Krauss's band Union Station. Hull then became the first bluegrass musician to be awarded the prestigious Presidential Scholarship at Boston's Berklee School of Music. On *Daybreak* (co-produced by Hull and Union Station's Barry Bales), Hull expands her range even more. She wrote seven of the album's twelve tracks, and her playing reflects a new maturity and assurance—what she calls "playing with a point to prove"—and that point is particularly well made on the instrumental cuts "Bombshell" and "Chasin' Skies." Her vocals still remind listeners of Alison Krauss, but you can hear this artist coming into her own, especially on the Kevin McClung-penned "Easy Come, Easy Go" and "Wouldn't Matter to Me." With a studio band consisting of luminaries like Bales, Stuart Duncan, and Bryan Sutton, Hull demonstrates her growing maturity on this new Rounder release.❖

Valerie Smith
Blame It on the Bluegrass
Bell Buckle Records

Blame It on the Bluegrass is not a full-length CD. With six cuts, it's more of an EP (extended play). In 2004, former teacher Valerie Smith teamed up with the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, Kentucky, to bring bluegrass music into schools. In 2010 Smith and her band Liberty Pike, along with a few guests, recorded *Blame It on the Bluegrass*, the first release ever recorded in "The Cave," the museum's studio. Produced by Becky Buller (the East Tennessee State University bluegrass program alumna who co-wrote the title cut and "A Good Day, Lord"), *Blame It on the Bluegrass* covers a lot of ground in only six tracks, from the rollicking "Four Leaf Clover" to the honky-tonk tale "Where the Sun Never Shines"; from the 1940s Merle Travis hit "No Vacancy" to the love-gone-bad ballad "Slow Healing Heart." It's a package that leaves you wanting more, and more is on the way: Smith and her band recorded twelve songs in The Cave, and the remaining six will be released early in 2012. ❖

Her Troublesome Boys: The Lucy Furman Story
Greta McDonough
Motes Books, Louisville, Kentucky
$8 (paperback), 148 pages

Children's literature gets short shrift in modern Appalachian literature, dismissed as being simple and dumbed-down. Despite this prejudice, many works for children form the basis for our region's letters. Take for example James Still's *Jack and the Wonderbeans* and *Sporty Creek*—which stand shoulder to shoulder with his more famous (and more widely-taught) works. In fact, if Still's *River of Earth* were published today, it would undoubtedly be marketed as a young adult novel. Our literature in Appalachia would suffer indeed without the contributions of authors like Paul Brett Johnson, George Ella Lyon, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Katherine Paterson, Cynthia Rylant, Anne Shelby, and others.

Their works speak not only to children but also provide profound lessons and entertainment for adults. What makes good children's literature—whether picture books or young adult novels—is the way it transcends any age and touches anyone.

For those reasons, Greta McDonough's book *Her Troublesome Boys: The Lucy Furman Story* is a worthy addition to anyone's collection of great Appalachian literature.

Set in the early 1900s, it is the story of the educated and refined Lucy Furman, from the flatlands of western Kentucky, who wants to be of service, so she packs up and moves to the Hindman Settlement School in the far mountains of the state at the invitation of an old college friend, one of the school's founders. Once there, Furman becomes a teacher who changes the lives of many Appalachian children, including Albert Stewart, who would later found the Appalachian Writers Workshop and *Appalachian Heritage* magazine. Furman went on to write bestselling books about her experiences and built Oak Ledge, which eventually became James Still's in-town residence.

McDonough, a professor, makes her debut with this book, and it's interesting that she, like Furman, is from western Kentucky but has been profoundly changed by the school, particularly its writers workshop.

Writing a novel for children is hard enough, but McDonough has also crafted an historical novel about a real person. She pulls it all off with grace, intelligence, and prose that sings as beautifully as the waters of Troublesome Creek, which meanders through the school's campus and the book.

Furman's story is about the power of education and realizing one's self-worth, and it's a great tale of empowerment. Subtly woven throughout is the meticulously researched story of the settlement school. Despite the moving story and information, it's the writing that really matters here. McDonough takes us into Furman's heart and mind and the results are inspired:

> She dreamed of riverboat whistles that night. She dreamed of flat fields of tobacco and corn, and of the sun rising early in the east, a great orange ball peeking over a flat horizon. She dreamed of her grandmother's flower garden and roads made of creek bed and small boys in black felt hats carrying basins of water. She dreamed of steep mountains clutching dark green mysteries close to their hearts.

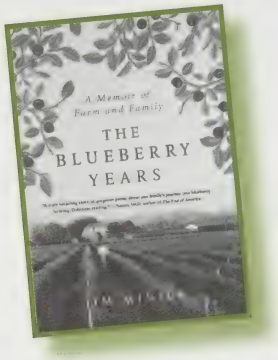
This paragraph ranks with some of the best writing of the region. McDonough shares Still's knack for economical language that builds a world entire in one sentence.

In *Her Troublesome Boys: The Lucy Furman Story*, McDonough preserves an ordinary woman who did extraordinary things in her time as a teacher and surrogate mother for keenly intelligent and rambunctious mountain boys. She also preserves a way of life that is gone, reminding us of times when teachers "brought willow-bottomed chairs . . . and used these

as stilts to cross the creek," when harried widowers dropped their sons at the school so they would have a "female presence" in their lives, when the teachers slept on the porch with the children no matter the weather, to take in the benefits of fresh air while "the deep overhang protected them from the worst of the weather."

Most of all, however, debut novelist McDonough provides a lovely new addition to Appalachian literature. *Her Troublesome Boys*, like the best children's literature, is a novel that everyone will enjoy. ❖

Silas House is the author of six books and serves as the National Endowment for the Humanities Chair of Appalachian Studies at Berea College in Kentucky.



The Blueberry Years: A Memoir of Farm and Family
Jim Minick
St. Martin's Press
New York, 2010
$27.99 (hardcover), 328 pages

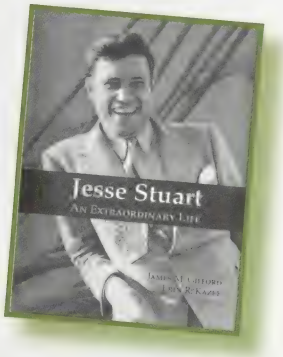
The Blueberry Years: A Memoir of Farm and Family, by Jim Minick, is an Appalachian love story; it's a story of stewardship of the land, joy in the blueberries with each new season, concern for humankind, and a story of devotion between a husband and wife. Minick writes with such passion about the difficulties and joys he and Sarah encounter that his readers not only understand the struggles involved in realizing the dream of an organic blueberry farm, they can almost taste the sweet and juicy fruit of the labor. With its inserts about blueberry varieties and farming techniques, the book could serve as a guide for future blueberry farmers. Minick even includes over twenty tried-and-true recipes featuring blueberries.

The choice to grow blueberries organically, despite organic farming's greater costs in money and time, demonstrates the Minicks' concern for the future of the land and the preservation of Appalachia's ecosystems. Unlike most farmers, including their neighbor, Joe, who grows strawberries the conventional way using chemicals for fertilizer and insect control, the Minicks strive to produce blueberries that leave the land as the growers found it. Their love for the farm and their desire to preserve the ecology of their Appalachian homeland is expressed throughout the book. This desire is shared by the pickers who descend on the Minicks' blueberry fields each season and willingly pay a higher price for organic blueberries, free from chemicals and pesticides.

The beauty of *The Blueberry Years* lies in Minick's ability to tell the story of hard work and determination while offering practical information about living off the land. Through the "Blue Interlude" sections of the book, Minick shares the knowledge he and Sarah gained in their endeavor, the scholarship he consulted along the way, information about specific blueberry varieties, and valuable advice for future organic farmers.

The Blueberry Years is a story of Appalachian people whose passion for their homeland is apparent with the turning of each page. Jim Minick has written a love story, a reference book, a recipe book, and a growers' resource guide, providing education and entertainment for a wide assortment of readers. ❖

Anita Shell is from Shell Creek, Tennessee, and currently lives in Johnson City. She is completing a master of arts in liberal studies at ETSU, with a focus on Appalachian women.



Jesse Stuart: An Extraordinary Life
James M. Gifford and Erin R. Kazee
Jesse Stuart Foundation
Ashland, Kentucky, 2010
$30 (hardcover), 480 pages

Most authors would hope to receive after their deaths a similarly high level of sustained interest from *their* readers as Jesse Stuart continues to receive from his. Stuart's literary output is impressive, and some of his works are classics of Appalachian literature (for instance, the 1949

autobiographical book *The Thread that Runs So True*). One organization is primarily responsible for Stuart's continued readership in the twenty-first century: the Jesse Stuart Foundation. Chartered in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1979 and subsequently based in Ashland, the foundation, according to its website, is "devoted to preserving the human and literary legacy of Jesse Stuart." In 1986, the foundation began reissuing Stuart's out-of-print books and now promotes books by other authors associated with Kentucky and Appalachia.

The success of the Jesse Stuart Foundation has largely resulted from the commitment of one person: Dr. James M. Gifford, who has been its executive director since 1985. Having first read Stuart's books years before heading the organization, Gifford is likely the foremost scholar of Stuart's life and work. *Jesse Stuart: An Extraordinary Life* contains the fruits of Gifford's insights. Co-written with Erin R. Kazee, the book is not a literary biography. Instead, it focuses on Stuart's life, based on details from multiple conversations with many members of the Stuart family and from meticulous research into written sources, including letters and newspaper clippings.

While Gifford's own life has long been interconnected with Stuart's, this new biography is admirably objective, exploring with candor such topics as Stuart's love life and his often combative relationships with fellow writers, agents, and editors. When confronting Stuart's interpersonal conflicts and emotional immaturity, the book empathetically provides plausible explanations concerning the deeper motivations for Stuart's behavior without resorting to facile psychological analysis.

Gifford and Kazee recount Stuart's struggle to come to terms with what he perceived as a personal slight when in 1973 *Esquire* magazine ignored Stuart's work in compiling short stories for its fortieth anniversary issue. Asking a friend to write a complaint letter to the magazine's editor, Stuart said, "I never heard of anything like what *Esquire* did to me. Never! Never! A big blow in my life, but not a knockout blow." Pointing out that Stuart had published more short stories in *Esquire* (58 total) than any other author, Gifford and Kazee suggest that Stuart's strong reaction was understandable.

Jesse Stuart: An Extraordinary Life also addresses Stuart's frustration with being labeled—marginalized, as he saw it—as a regional writer. He had lived in Washington, D.C., during his World War II military service, and he had taught in Reno, Nevada, in Egypt, and in the Philippines, and had traveled in Europe and Africa. "So why . . . should I be the only one considered that little regionalist?" Stuart apparently wondered aloud. Gifford and Kazee are clearly on Stuart's side when they discuss negative consequences brought about when literary critics and the general reading public view literature primarily from a regional—as opposed to a universal—perspective.

Painstakingly conceived and designed, this book features an agreeable font size, extensive endnotes and appendices, illuminating photo captions, and a generous array of rare photographs. It documents the career of an author who was born and reared in Appalachia and who extensively chronicled people and places of that region. Yet Gifford and Kazee make the case that Stuart's work is not only of regional significance but also of national and international interest. ❖

Professor of Appalachian Studies at East Tennessee State University, Ted Olson is the author of *Breathing in Darkness: Poems* and *Blue Ridge Folklife* and the editor of several books that explore Appalachian cultural history.

Human Costume
A. E. Stringer
Salmon Poetry
County Clare, Ireland, 2009
€12.00 (paperback), 96 pages

The poems in Art Stringer's latest collection center on the concept that human beings become multiple figures and can change themselves as if they are swapping one costume for another—a process that can "both veil and reveal what animates us." The title poem focuses on extreme situations: At the stroke of midnight, All Hallows Eve becomes All Saints Day, and when the speaker shows up at a Halloween party, he sees someone who is wearing his shoes, cap, gloves, and even his manner: His double, a charmer, has the audacity to make an unsuccessful pass at the speaker's

wife. But instead of being angry, the speaker is rather proud: "He's a brilliant study, like you-know-who. That's the beauty part." But at the witching hour he slips away, and the speaker is waiting for him: They exchange clothes, and the double "dwindles into the harvest moon." The speaker returns to the party, kissing a "fallen angel" en route—after all, it's a holy day.

Human beings and their ancestors have been apostrophizing the moon since the dawn of time. In "Halo Effect," the poet, out walking before dawn, sees a familiar atmospheric phenomenon, links it to a Renaissance artistic convention, and produces a memorable image:

> The halo
> goes where you go, as in
> sacred art: the holy figure
>
> in the background crowd
> always human, despite her
> unmistakable ring, her placid
> face turning aside.

Sometimes the poet's fascination with the heavens filters downward into the earthbound and the everyday. In "Phoenix Descending," a woefully out-of-shape speaker does some exercises, and soon, in the middle of a sequence of stretches, a "mortal daze" affects him from the blood draining away from his head:

> And in that imminent faint, whatever
> curtain or tree, whatever wall or
> skyline, whatever floor or grassy plain
> I see before me wavers and floods
> into the star-dotted sea called *this*
> *moment*.

Sometimes the poet can be brutally frank about relationships, and in so doing makes a commentary about the fallout from the vicious give-and-take that often comes with betrayal and divorce. In "Perilous Rescue," Stringer recounts the story of three marriages:

> I killed one wife by loving
> the other woman. In cold beds
> half-a-life ago, they did not
> deserve it.

But it does not end there: the consequences of infidelity seep like a toxin into the relationship with wife number three, who hates

> the sorry story up to now:
> my ex-wives, her children's
> double lives, the whole damned
> misfit otherness.

In "Dinner Theater," a brief encounter results in a road not taken when the hesitant, ineffectual speaker turns into a postmodern Prufrock:

> When your eyes trailed over, conceding blue
> affection, and hooked mine, I had to look away.
> "Call me," you said when I left. I said I would.
> What I did was lie for months, ears ringing.

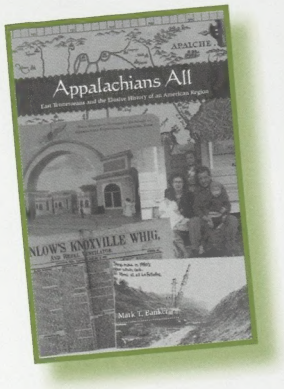
One of the delights of this collection is the attention paid to popular culture. Stringer is able to convey its deeper significance without spoiling any of the fun. In "Revenge of the Cactus People, 1954," a group of saguaros morph into B-movie atomic mutants, and in "Mirror Puzzle," Groucho and Harpo Marx engage once more in the empty-mirror scene from *Duck Soup*—are they themselves, or are they not? In "Backlot Warehouse," Stringer invents a place big enough to store the properties from all the classic movies (*King Kong, The Maltese Falcon, The Wizard of Oz*), just in case some "Hollywood outsider" wants to use them all to make one single supercolossal blockbuster:

> If all the props were planted in one project,
> the film would tell the story of a nation's
> birth, a monster audience, an appetite
> for thrills impossible to overestimate. ❖

Philip St.Clair is professor emeritus at Ashland Community and Technical College in Kentucky. His most recent poetry collection is *Divided House*, published by Finishing Line Press in 2005.

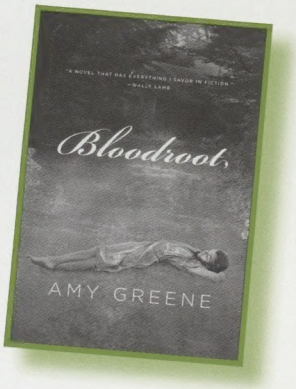
BOOKS IN BRIEF

Edwina Pendarvis



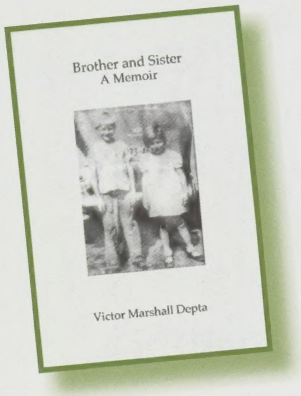
Appalachians All: East Tennesseans and the Elusive History of an American Region
Mark T. Banker (University of Tennessee Press, 2010)

Banker's *Appalachians All* represents both a kind of family memoir and a social history of three locations in East Tennessee. His book features Knoxville, once the "Queen City of the Mountains," Cades Cove, which represents a timber-tourism community, and coal-mining communities of Clearfork Valley. Banker investigates the relationship between the city and the country in his study and examines how place shapes residents' views of themselves. The book is divided into three parts. The first covers the years between 1750 and 1880, when Appalachians were not generally considered different from other Americans and didn't see themselves as different. In the second section, Banker treats the period of industrialization, from 1870 to 1930. In the third, covering the years from 1920 to 2008, he describes the economic and social changes that fostered Appalachians' ambivalence toward themselves. Always conscious of the dangers of succumbing to a romantic (and reactionary) nostalgia, Banker makes a solid case for re-imagining ourselves and offers historical means for doing so. ❖



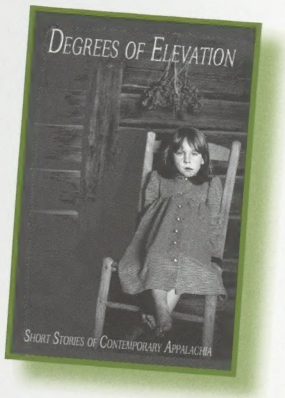
Bloodroot
Amy Greene (Alfred A. Knopf, 2010)

The main character of *Bloodroot* (winner of the 2011 Weatherford Prize for Fiction) could be Myra, who doesn't enter the story "in person" until late in the book; but more accurately, the main character is a spirit of nature, embodied in four generations of women. Amy Greene, a native of Tennessee, tells a story in which Myra's beautiful ways cast a spell on those close to her—fascinating, mystifying, frustrating those who love her and infuriating those who try to cage her. Myra is so closely associated with Bloodroot Mountain and its plants and animals that her story can be read as almost an allegory of our romantic feelings about and abusive treatment of the mountains themselves. The novel's characters are intriguing, and the dramatic plot is revealed through a narrative that shifts from one to another of six characters. There's plenty of violence but enough tenderness to stave off despair. Like the popular *Winter's Bone*, this story could be described as fairy tale *noir*. It has witchy women, magic, and even a scary finger bone. ❖



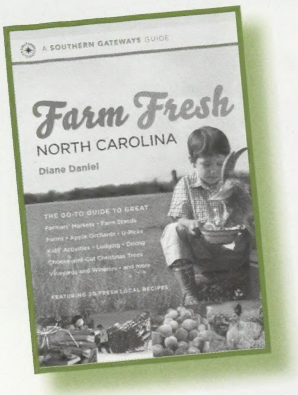
Brother and Sister: A Memoir
Victor Depta (Blair Mountain Press, 2010)

The wild escapades in *Brother and Sister* are usually funny and sad by turns and often both funny and sad at the same time. They embody the story of a man who is having a tough time feeling at home anywhere, in spite of his love for his family. In the way that Depta's stories and plays often do, the blend of low comedy and high abstraction creates a surrealistic effect. There's plenty of action, argument, and introspection—the introspection of a narrator who is outside the intimacy of the family circle. Think of Jesse Stuart's *Taps for Private Tussie* on steroids. The narrator of *Brother and Sister* has successfully escaped poverty by becoming an academic but has alienated himself from his family in the process. As with all good family stories, most of the relationships in this one are love-hate. Depta finds humor and poignancy even in the hate-hate ones. Like the narrator, the reader both laughs at and wants to be part of this feckless family, whose members return some of the havoc wreaked on them. ❖



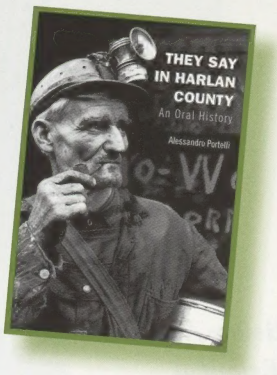
Degrees of Elevation: Short Stories of Contemporary Appalachia
Charles Dodd White and Page Seay (Bottom Dog Press, 2010)

This story collection is an extraordinary new offering in publisher Larry Smith's decades-long project to bring working-class people's stories to readers. Editors White and Seay introduce the book with the warning, "Here you will not find tales replete with folksy charm and backwoods romanticism." Instead, what this collection presents is an often painful reality that has its own beauty. Stories by Silas House, Dick Hague, Chris Holbrook, John McManus, Valerie Nieman, Chris Offutt, Ron Rash, and Crystal Wilkinson are accompanied by entries from writers who have less familiar names, such as Mindy Beth Miller and Jarrid Deaton. This is an all-star line-up of stories. Alex Taylor's "The Coal Thief"—stark and lovely in its imagery—epitomizes the tragic theme underlying all these stories and reflected in the book's dedication to the twenty-nine miners killed in the 2010 Upper Big Branch Explosion in West Virginia. ❖



Farm Fresh North Carolina
Diane Daniel (University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

Daniel describes her book as a "celebration of our farmers' ingenuity and successes." *Farm Fresh North Carolina* is a guide to enjoying those successes, in the form of agricultural fairs and festivals, farm stands, local-foods restaurants, bed-and-breakfast establishments, vineyards, and "u-picks." The author describes places that offer educational and entertaining activities for children, and sidebars inform readers about historical and contemporary issues related to farming. *Farm Fresh* also includes twenty recipes featuring local fare, ranging from concoctions like vegan-cauliflower-walnut soup and sweet potato pie ice cream to old-fashioned apple pie. Among the many entries for the mountain region are the John C. Campbell Folk School, Zydeco Moon Farm and Cabins, and Earth Fare, a leader among organic grocers. The book is part of a series encouraging local tourism and sustainable farming. ❖



They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History
Alessandro Portelli (University of Oxford, 2011)

Winner of the 2011 Weatherford Award for Nonfiction, this ambitious work strikes a highly readable balance between the personal and the scholarly. Portelli's almost lifelong romance with North American activism in general and with coal strikes and other struggles of coal mining families in particular led to his spending more than a quarter of a century collecting stories of people who live in the coalfields of eastern Kentucky. The result of his devotion is a people's history of Harlan County, factual and yet rich in folklore, myths, and customs. Some 150 Harlan Countians were interviewed, and Portelli weaves their narratives into intriguing themes in chapters such as "The Bear and the Sycamore Tree," "War and Peace," "These Signs Shall Follow Them," "A Space of Their Own," "Harlan on Our Minds," and "Staying Alive." ❖

IT'S AN OUTDOOR DRAMA ABOUT CHEROKEE HISTORY_
UNTO THESE HILLS
IT'S AN OUTDOOR DRAMA ABOUT MOUNTAINTOP MINING_
UNDO THESE HILLS
DANIEL
FOR NOW & THEN

Charlie Daniel is editorial cartoonist for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

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